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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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Frank Williams 1942-2021

Tributes pour in for legendary Formula 1 team boss *p4*

Two brand new teenage talents are sought for 2023's British F4 grid

FREE BRITISH F4 DRIVES UP FOR GRABS IN NEW CONTEST

New talents will get a chance in Formula 4

By Graham Keilloh

Two unknown teenage talents have a chance to get onto the real-life 2023 British Formula 4 grid via a fully funded new Racing Star programme.

One male and one female 14 or 15-year-old will get a full British F4 season and 25 days of testing. The contest to win the prize starts early next year with five online races from which the best will proceed to a sim-racing final in Bolton.

The two most promising candidates will then get six months' Motorsport UK Academy training before a full season in a Hitech GP-assisted team. It is free for participants and funded by British F4's new sponsor ROKiT.

The programme is led by ex-Force India deputy team principal Bob Fernley, now head of the FIA single-seater commission.

Full story, p5

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COMMENT

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The master of all he surveys: Frank casts his eye over his first champion, Alan Jones

FAREWELL TO A TRUE LEGEND

If you looked up the word determination in the dictionary, it would not be surprising to find a picture of Frank Williams alongside it. The achievements of Williams and his laser-focused drive to succeed at motorsport's top table is virtually unmatched.

Although he had not been in the greatest of health for several years, it was still a shock to the system when the news filtered through on Sunday that he had passed away. He was the last of a certain generation of team owners and his template for his rise to the top of grand prix racing had not been done before, and it certainly will not be done again.

From wheeling and dealing racing car parts from a phone box, Williams progressed up the motor racing ranks to finally make it into the grand prix paddock. Behind him were a series of debts that were stacking up, some very risky moves and some massive gambles that he had taken, the likes of which could have broken a lesser man.

There was an merger with Canadian businessman Walter Wolf that almost derailed his ambitions, but he bounced back – not for the first time in his career. It was, actually, the springboard to the huge success that the British team went on to achieve.

Just as the team was writing its own chapter in the Formula 1 history books, there was another challenge for Williams to overcome when he was seriously injured in a road car accident leaving a pre-season test session at Paul Ricard in France.

It left him paralysed and that, in itself, would have been enough to knock anyone off their trajectory, but not Williams. He battled through and returned to the helm of the squad to mastermind its domination of the 1990s. Titles with Nelson Piquet, Nigel Mansell, Alain Prost, Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve all came after that terrible accident.

Speak to anyone who has worked in the inner sanctum at Williams, and they will tell you that a no-nonsense attitude permeates throughout the entire team. There is no fuss, no hassle and a dedication to get things done and to do them in the right way. That is the stamp that Sir Frank Williams put on his team, and it is one of the reasons that grand prix fans came to love the team so much.

With the success that Williams had – particularly with British drivers – it is hard to find a Formula 1 fanatic who doesn't appreciate all that the team has done. The Williams F1 story will continue, of course, with different people now at the helm. But it hasn't really been the same since Sir Frank handed over the reins of the team.

We salute you, Sir Frank, rest in peace. There will never be another person quite like you.

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MOTORSPORT NEWS

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RACING NEWS

OBITUARY

Sir Frank Williams 1942-2021

TRIBUTES PAID TO SIR FRANK WILLIAMS

Stars and colleagues pay their respects to team boss, who passed away on Sunday aged 79

Photos: Motorsport Images

Tributes have poured in for legendary team owner Sir Frank Williams whose death was announced on Sunday.

The memories have been led by his long-time business partner and genius designer Sir Patrick Head, who said that Williams' positive attitude had helped the squad to become one of the most formidable on the grid.

A statement from the team, issued on Sunday, read: "It is with great sadness that on behalf of the Williams family, the team can confirm the death of Sir Frank Williams CBE, founder and former team principal of Williams Racing, at the age of 79. After being admitted into hospital on Friday, Sir Frank passed away peacefully this morning [Sunday] surrounded by his family."

Head joined the fledgling Williams outfit in 1975 and the pair went on to secure seven drivers' titles with Alan Jones, Keke Rosberg, Nelson Piquet, Nigel Mansell, Alain Prost, Damon Hill and Jacques Villeneuve

Head said: "There were times when I found the challenges [at Williams] overpowering, but Frank was always positive, always convinced that 'everything will work out, chap', that it was hard not to be swept along with his positive attitude.

"Over the years we had few reasons to argue, but I can truthfully say that I never had any reason to doubt his commitment to supporting myself, whatever engineering challenges arose, even sometimes when we took a little time to correct them.

"Frank's commitment and enthusiasm towards success on the track was infectious, not only to me but to all others who worked at Williams. Right up to the final days of the Williams family running the company, Frank could be seen in the factory and particularly in the 'Race Shop' with the cars and the team mechanics, inspiring his workforce."

After entering F1 running customer cars, Williams became a constructor in its own right in 1977. It won its first grand prix when Clay Regazzoni prevailed in the 1979 British Grand Prix at Silverstone.

The Oxfordshire team won the drivers' and constructors' crowns in 1980, with champion Jones partnered alongside Carlos Reutemann. Williams claimed a second constructors' trophy a year later before newcomer Rosberg became the last Cosworth-powered World champion in 1982. Joining forces with Honda turbo power in 1984 sowed the seed for further glory despite Williams himself suffering life-changing injuries in a 1986 road accident.

The team prevailed with Piquet winning an intense duel with team-mate Mansell for the 1987 crown. Partnering with Renault in 1989 led to Adrian Newey-penned Williams dominating F1, with drivers' titles for Mansell (1992), Prost (1993), Hill (1996) and Villeneuve (1997). as well as BTCC triumph with Alain Menu in 1997.

Williams claimed nine F1 constructors' trophies between 1980 and 1997. Latterly headed by Williams' daughter Claire, Dorilton Capital bought the team in August 2020.

Head and Williams formed a formidable partnership

Williams was back at the front in 1992

The first Williams Grand Prix Engineering win was at the British GP in 1979

The first champion: Alan Jones in 1980

Damon Hill claimed a World title with Williams in '96

TRIBUTES

Lewis Hamilton
Seven-time World champion
"Sir Frank Williams was one of the kindest people I had the pleasure of meeting in this sport. What he achieved is something truly special. Until his last days I know he remained a racer and a fighter at heart. His legacy will live on forever."

George Russell
Current Williams driver
"It has been a genuine honour racing for him and being a small part of the incredible legacy he leaves behind, a legacy that will forever live on in the heart and soul of this team. Rest in peace, Sir Frank. Thank you for everything."

David Coulthard
F1 driver for Williams
"[Frank Williams was] an icon of the sport and a man who defied all odds in front of him. We will miss you Frank and the whole sport will remember all of your achievements."

Ann Bradshaw
Former Williams PR chief
"My racing family has always been Williams so can't describe my sadness at hearing of the death of Frank. My boss, friend and inspiration for many years RIP. He had a smile when he was with his beloved cars and racing drivers. This picture is how I want to remember him."

Jean Todt
President of the FIA
"Very sad news. Sir Frank Williams leaves a lasting impression on the history of F1. He was a pioneer, an exceptional personality and an exemplary man. On behalf of the entire FIA community, our thoughts are with his family, friends and Williams Racing. Rest in peace, my friend."

Zak Brown
Boss of McLaren

"We have lost a true hero of our sport and an inspiration for so many beyond it. Sir Frank not only created a special F1 legacy but showed the power of human determination to overcome huge adversity. Thoughts with his family and the Williams team."

Damon Hill
1996 F1 World champion
"Sir Frank gave me such a chance in my lifetime and I am indebted to him forever. He was a very important person in my career and also a huge contributor to our sport. Frank had a passion for cars, for racing. There was nothing else he was really interested in doing and he was just remarkable in every respect. He and Sir Patrick [Head] and everyone at Williams gave their drivers everything they needed to fight for championships, and that's all he wanted to do."

Alan Gow
BTCC chief executive

"Frank was such a fierce competitor, which showed through right from the beginning of his team's BTCC assault. He knew exactly the resources needed to be successful, brought a new level to the championship and was entirely honourable in all my dealings with him. Rest in peace Sir Frank."

RACING NEWS

Rising star Aspin steps up

TEENAGE ASPIN GETS TWO-YEAR CARRERA CUP GB PROGRAMME

Teenager Will Aspin will graduate from Ginetta racing to compete in Porsche Carrera Cup GB for the next two seasons.

Ginetta Junior graduate Aspin, 17, finished third in this year's Ginetta GT5 Challenge, taking three race wins with Elite Motorsport. Aspin is coached by Chris Hodgetts, this week's Motorsport News readers' Q&A guest *(see p20-25)*.

Aspin, who has already sampled Carrera Cup GB's new 992 car at Silverstone, told MN: "It came about with Chris and wanting to step up from GT5s, it was one of the options from seeing how Scott McKenna did and Josh Malin, they both did really well jumping from the GT5 into the Cup car.

"We've chosen the biggest step [among their options], and my dad always says if we're going to do it we might as well do it properly and see where it goes."

The initial plan is for Aspin to race in Carrera Cup's Pro-Am class next year and its top Pro class the year after, though Aspin added he is flexible. "I'll have a go trying to be Pro this year if I'm fast enough, but we'll see.I'd like to go out and win it but I've only done two years of racing really."

NEW RACING STAR SCHEME OFFERS TWO FREE BRITISH F4 SEATS

Fernley and ROKiT seek one male and one female unknown star teenager to join 2023 British F4 grid via esports contest next year

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Rachel Bourne

Fernley led on the F4 opportunity

By Graham Keilloh

Fully funded British Formula 4 drives for two teenagers are up for grabs in a esports contest launched by FIA single-seater commission head and ex-Force India deputy boss Bob Fernley.

The Racing Star contest for those aged 14 or 15 offers one male and one female a place on 2023's British F4 grid. The free-to-join competition is funded by British F4's new title partner ROKiT, and was unveiled last week at an event where covers were taken off British F4's new Tatuus T-421 car.

The competition starts on January 1 2022 and competitors will have two weeks for each round to set their fastest lap time via online sim racing. The 20 fastest boys and girls will then battle for points in live online races.

The top 16 boys and girls after five rounds will be invited to the grand final held at the University of Bolton on May 14-15 from which one boy and one girl will proceed to become real British F4 racers with Hitech GP. The prize also includes 25 days' testing and six months' Motorsport UK Academy development.

Fernley said: "A number of things [inspired the scheme], my initial interest was I wanted to try and bring more youngsters into education of motorsport, but what worried me then is we haven't come further down to apprenticeships and youngsters driving."

The 2022 British F4 champion, as well as 12 FIA superlicence points, will also receive a funded Formula Regional European test plus will be embedded with McLaren at a Formula 1 grand prix.

MINI JCW EXPANDED CALENDAR UNVEILED

Entries are now open for 2022's Mini Challenge JCW championship as its slightly expanded seven-meeting 20-race calendar is unveiled.

Entries opened last week for the contest that, as in the previous two seasons, has all of its meetings on the British Touring Car Championship programme.

The calendar has one more race than this year, and Silverstone returns after a year away.

Mini Challenge also has technical changes for the new season including a new mandatory body kit that has revisions to the front and rear bumper, sills and wheel arch trims, plus a new air intake position to help when running in traffic.

CALENDAR

Mini Challenge JCW 2022

RACE	DATE	VENUE
1, 2 & 3	April 21-24	Donington Park
4, 5 & 6	May 13-15	Brands Hatch Indy
7 & 8	June 10-12	Oulton Park
9, 10 & 11	July 29-31	Knockhill
12, 13 & 14	Aug 12-14	Snetterton
15, 16 & 17	Sept 23-25	Silverstone
18, 19 & 20	Oct 7-9	Brands Hatch GP

JCW Minis get one more race and a new body kit

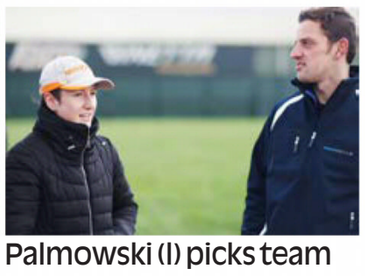
GINETTA JUNIOR SCHOLAR PALMOWSKI PICKS TEAM FOR 2022

Ginetta Junior Scholarship winner Alisha Palmowski has chosen to join the Preptech UK team for her prize fully funded season in the championship next year.

Palmowski beat more than 60 young drivers to win the latest scholarship, becoming the contest's second female victor.

Following discussions with a number of teams, the 15-year-old from Manchester has selected Preptech UK for her debut car-racing campaign, having previously tested with the squad.

Palmowski said: "I originally met Oliver [Barnard, team principal] from Preptech during the 2021 scholarship and we kept in touch. They were able to quickly help me build confidence [in the test], so that I was able to get the best out of both myself and the car with limited previous running. This gave a good insight into how the team works."



Palmowski (l) picks team

Champion pair will form British GT McLaren attack

CHAMPIONS POWELL AND LINES JOIN BRITISH GT GRID

Reigning Britcar champion Will Powell and Ginetta GT4 Supercup class champion Stewart Lines will contest 2022's British GT championship in a McLaren 570S GT4 backed by Lines' business Maximum Networks.

Championship debutants Lines and Powell will team up in a Pro-Am partnership for British GT's landmark 30th season.

Professional driver Powell is a former Brabham Automotive development driver in Australia and raced a Hyundai i30N TCR in this year's Touring Car Trophy.

Lines – whose Maximum Motorsport organisation organises TCT as well as the Volkswagen Racing Cup – will focus on GT racing for the first time following spells competing in the BTCC and VW Racing Cup, plus one-off Britcar appearances last season.

Their GT4 programme also dovetails with TCR UK, which shares its opening two rounds with British GT.

Lines said: "I believe we will be a competitive entry against the young guns in GT4. The fact that TCR UK is now supporting the championship is the ideal alignment of business interests to make racing here a viable option."

Powell added: "Stewart and I have often talked about teaming up. Our racing and business commitments have finally aligned for 2022, so now is the time."

BECKETT LAUNCHES UNITED FORMULA FORD FOR 2022

James Beckett and MotorSport Vision Racing have launched for 2022 United Formula Ford for all ages of FF1600 car and encompassing Beckett's existing Heritage and Champion of Brands contests.

United Formula Ford has been created to control costs and allow various teams and drivers to compete on a near-level playing field. It has a five-class structure: Historic (Pre '72), Classic (Pre '82), Heritage (Pre '93), Regional (Pre '99) and Star (Post '98).

All classes will have the same points system, allowing the champion to come from any class. The overall race winner gets two extra points.

Its provisional seven-round calendar starts at Donington Park on April 10 and concludes with three Brands Hatch rounds that also will include the Champion of Brands. Each event will have two races on a single day.

Beckett told Motorsport News that Heritage was not supported well enough on a race-by-race basis to continue as a standalone championship. Under United Formula Ford, Champion of Brands will also have its own points table and an end-of-season standalone champion.

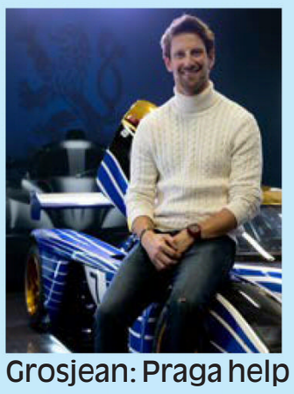
Beckett said: "Everyone knows how passionate I am about Formula Ford 1600. United Formula Ford has been designed to bring the entire Formula Ford community together [and] celebrate the full history of Formula Ford 1600."

Pre-'93 Heritage contest becomes part of new category

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

RACING NEWS

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Dickon Siddall, Praga, McMurtry,



Grosjean: Praga help

GROSJEAN SEEKING PRAGA R1 DRIVE

Formula 1 and IndyCar star Romain Grosjean is looking to drive Praga's high-performance R1 sportscar for the first time in the near future.

Grosjean is an ambassador for Praga, whose R1, having starred in Britcar, gets its own one-make Praga Cup championship next year.

When asked by Motorsport News if he was looking to drive the R1 soon, Grosjean said: "Yeah, we're trying to figure something out, that would be nice for sure. We do have quite a few projects in mind, involving a bit of driving and more.

"We've never really got the occasion [for him to drive it yet], I know the car very well, I've been around it quite a bit, in it, never drove it. But I'm looking forward to the next project."

Grosjean also explained how his relationship with Praga started: "Long time ago, I was friends with [someone] at Praga go-kart, got into the Praga family and we shared some values, and they thought there could be a good link here to do things together. Happy to be part of a brand that has the same values and ideas as I have. Maybe a bit early to the party but I'd rather be early than late."

Esterson gets GB3 promotion

Formula Ford star Esterson has already impressed Douglas Motorsport in GB3 testing

HAYES WINNER ESTERSON GETS GB3 MOVE WITH DOUGLAS MOTORSPORT

USA's 19-year-old Formula Ford star steps up to the GB3 championship for 2022

By Graham Keilloh

American teenage rising star Max Esterson will graduate from UK Formula Ford competition to race in the GB3 championship next season driving for Douglas Motorsport.

Esterson driving for Low Dempsey Racing as part of the Team USA Scholarship took a dominant win in FF1600's Silverstone Walter Hayes Trophy showpiece last month, a week on from finishing second in the Formula Ford Festival having started the final 13th.

The 19-year-old becomes Douglas Motorsport's first confirmed driver for a multi-car GB3 entry in 2022. Esterson has already completed test outings with the team and will now embark on a close-season driver development programme.

Esterson said: "Switching from the Formula Ford to the GB3 car was a bit of an adjustment, but Wayne [Douglas, team principal] and the team have done a great job welcoming me to the series and are providing me with a great place to continue learning. Testing has gone well so far and we are already working hard to prepare for the first race of the season in April."

Wayne Douglas added: "With some exciting upgrades to the car being introduced and a fantastic 2022 calendar, the series firmly remains the pinnacle of the UK single-seater scene.

"Max is a very talented young driver and we're delighted to welcome him to the team. He's put in some superb performances in Formula Ford this season, and [going by] early testing times he'll be a leading name in GB3 as well."

MGCC SET FOR NEW SUPPORTS AND MG LIVE RETURN

The MG Car Club is set for new guest categories at its race meetings in 2022 as well as for the return of its Silverstone showpiece MG Live.

Equipe Classic Racing, a frequent MGCC guest in recent years, will hold its own meetings in 2022, leaving MGCC with available track time. MG Live meanwhile has not run since 2018, due to 2019 resurfacing then subsequently due to Covid.

MGCC's recently unveiled 2022 provisional calendar contains a mid-June two-day Silverstone Grand Prix circuit round, and the club is working on the basis that it will be MG Live.

Furthermore Jaguar Enthusiasts' Club will hold its Mike Hawthorn Challenge at that meeting for the first time. Ecurie Classic Racing will also attend the meeting plus MGCC's Brands Hatch and Donington Park rounds.

MGCC's race competitions secretary Mark Baulch also confirmed to Motorsport News that the club expects to see Morgan Challenge, another frequent MGCC guest, at meetings next year.

Baulch said: "I'm in the happy position where I've actually had to turn a couple of people [guests] away. That bodes well for 2023 when we're looking forward to the 100th anniversary of the MG marque."

CALENDAR

MGCC provisional 2022

VENUE	DATE
Brands Hatch Indy	March 20
Cadwell Park	May 8
Silverstone GP	June 11-12
Donington Park National	July 2
Oulton Park International	September 3
Snetterton 300	September 24

MGCC's MG Live Silverstone showpiece is set to return

Champion pair Kapadia (second from left) and Wells (c) will resume in 2022 Praga Cup

CHAMPION KAPADIA GETS MORE PRAGA IN 2022

Reigning Britcar Praga champions Alex Kapadia and Richard Wells will be back racing the Praga R1 in 2022 in the new one-make Praga Cup.

Kapadia and Wells – with Tim Gray stepping in for Kapadia at Donington Park's final round – racing for Tim Gray Motorsport topped this year's Praga contest that ran as part of the Britcar Endurance championship. The pair will now return in the Praga-only championship that has its inaugural season in 2022.

Kapadia told Motorsport News: "[Wells is] only in his second year of racing this year, so next year he'll hopefully have a bit more experience of racing, he'll know all the circuits.

"We've always had pace throughout this year, we haven't quite put it together. We won the championship but we didn't actually get a race win unbelievably. So we need to get all of those ducks in line.

"Praga are taking the logical step of going from a grid shared with Britcar into its own grid. They're so quick these cars that when you are racing on a mixed grid it's rare to get a lap where you're not trying to dive bomb another car. Those guys will enjoy their racing more because we're not always trying to get past them."

McMURTRY SPEIRLING FIRST ELECTRIC TRACK CAR TO GET UK TEST DAY OK

McMurtry's Speirling has become the first electric track car to be approved for motorsport test days in the UK alongside combustion cars.

The no-rules Speirling, which Derek Bell drove at this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed, has got approval to join MotorSport Vision test days at Donington Park, after McMurtry produced marshals' training materials and added car safety features. McMurtry bosses added the move is a step towards racing for the team.

Electric track vehicles had not been allowed on mixed test days previously due to safety concerns, though electric-only track days have taken place and road EVs have been allowed on mixed track days. Earlier this year the Speirling ran alongside combustion cars at a Donington open test day, the first instance of an electric vehicle taking part in such an event.

McMurtry has also worked to reduce potential infrastructure problems, with existing three-phase power supply found in most pit garages sufficient to top up the Speirling's battery between sessions plus the car needs relatively few recharges.

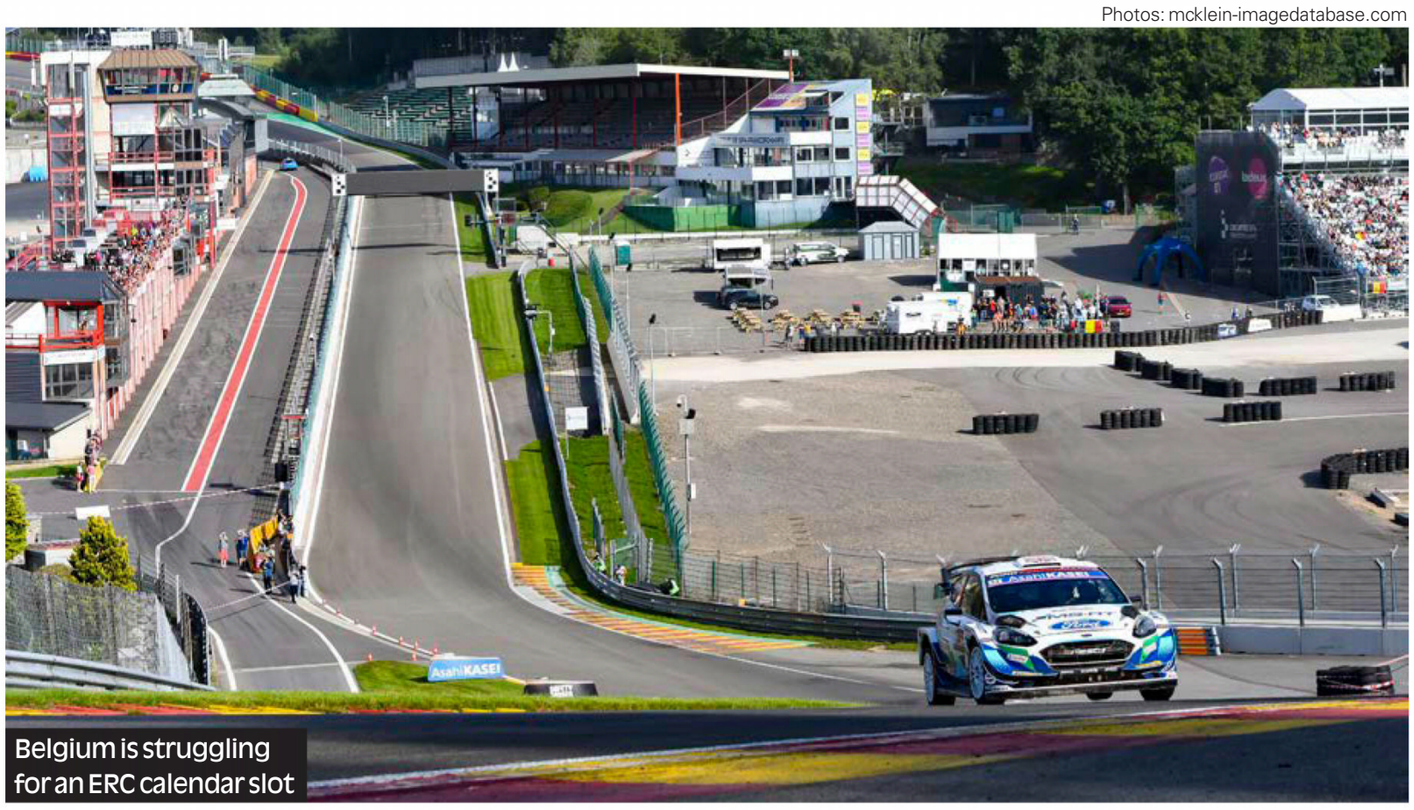
McMurtry Speirling in electric first for UK test days

RALLY NEWS

YPRES DATE WOE WILL NOT DERAIL RALLY NORTHERN IRELAND BID

Potential round in the United Kingdom in 2022 still on the cards despite Belgian European event dramas

Photos: mcklein-imagedatabase.com



Belgium is struggling for an ERC calendar slot

By Graham Lister

The Ypres Rally's no-show on the latest European championship calendar won't harm Rally Northern Ireland's ongoing push to land a World championship shot for 2022.

Motorsport News understands Ypres bosses have so far been unable to agree on an ERC return date with WRC Promoter for what would be the Belgian event's first appearance in the European series since 2016.

Ypres, which made its World championship debut in August, had been expected to host an ERC counter for the next two seasons ahead of a long-term WRC contract coming on stream from 2024. But problems agreeing a workable date with WRC Promoter means there's currently no Ypres on what is set to be an eight-round ERC season rather than the expected nine-event schedule.

There had been suggestions that if Ypres couldn't agree an ERC slot then it would take Northern Ireland's mooted place on the 2022 WRC calendar if funding from the Northern Ireland Assembly was not forthcoming, something it did in 2021 when cash for a UK World round failed to materialise.

But an MN source in Belgium with strong links to the Ypres organisation and the Belgian Rally Championship insisted a WRC round is not on the table until 2024.

"There's a contract for 2024 but there's no money and no plan to come back next year," the source said. "Ypres doesn't have to host the ERC to get its WRC contract. The problem is the date. What has been proposed doesn't work for Ypres. If it was the WRC there could be a solution but the European championship is not the same level and not the same return [on investment]."

Motorsport News understands seven ERC rounds (Azores, Canarias, Fafe, Liepaja, Poland, Rome and Zlin) are confirmed but doubts remain about Rally Hungary due to safety issues on the 2020 and 2021 events. This means there's currently a vacant slot on the 2022 roster, albeit one earmarked for Ypres.

JUNIOR WRC GETS EVENTS FIRMED UP – AT LAST

The FIA World Motor Sport Council has approved the 2022 Junior WRC schedule at the second time of asking after it rejected the original version when it gathered in October over the make-up of the calendar.

An e-vote of its members last month ratified a revised five-round schedule, which includes a return to a snow event for the first time since 2020 and a double-points Acropolis Rally finale in September.

Meanwhile, M-Sport Poland, which runs the JWRC, have organised an opportunity to for potential competitors to sample the Ford Fiesta Rally3 at the Silesia Ring circuit in Poland next Tuesday. The four-wheel-drive Fiesta Rally3 built in Krakow replaces the existing front-wheel-drive Fiesta Rally4 as the JWRC's base car from 2022.

The JWRC regularly attracts British and Irish drivers with Jon Armstrong, who finished runner-up, and William Creighton competing in 2021.

CALENDAR

Junior WRC

DATE	VENUE
February 24-27	Sweden
April 21-24	Croatia
May 19-22	Portugal
July 14-17	Estonia
September 8-11	Acropolis

Junior WRC runners will get the chance to compete on snow in 2022

Hyundai and Neuville showed pace in Italy before a crash

HYUNDAI BOSS PLEDGES TO IMPROVE AFTER 2021 TROUBLES

Hyundai team chief Andrea Adamo has vowed to "learn the lessons" from a troubled World Rally Championship campaign when the hybrid-based Rally1 era begins next year.

Toyota took a clean sweep of WRC titles in 2021, including the makes' award, which Hyundai had won for the last two seasons.

On last month's Rally Monza, Sebastien Ogier headed Elfyn Evans in a Toyota 1-2, while Dani Sordo was the best-placed Hyundai driver after Thierry Neuville crashed on day two. Nevuille and Ott Tanak, who missed Monza for personal reasons, were often the quickest drivers in 2021 but suffered a spate of mechanical failures while holding event-winning positions.

Following Hyundai's latest defeat in Italy, Adamo said: "This has been a championship in which we should have done better, but we can only learn the lessons from our mistakes."

Nevertheless, Sordo's third place in Monza was Hyundai's 17th podium finish of the season – the most it has scored during a single year. The Spaniard will continue as a bit-part driver in 2022, sharing a seat with Oliver Solberg, while Neuville and Tanak will mount full campaigns.

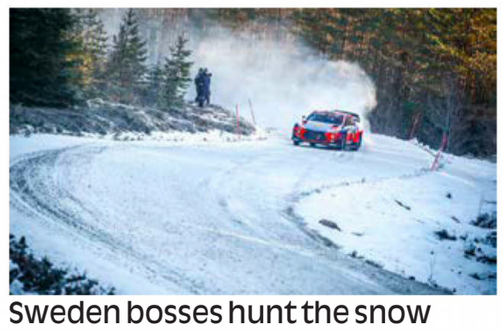
DATE DELAY TO BOOST RALLY SWEDEN CHALLENGE IN 2022

Rally Sweden bosses are confident of true winter conditions even though the 2022 event is running one week later than normal to accommodate the final week of the Olympic Winter Games in China.

Event chief Glenn Olsson reckons the rally's relocation further north to Umea will counter the move to a later date of February 24-27 when Sweden hosts round two of WRC's new hybrid era.

"In terms of winter conditions, it seems to be in our advantage in the Umea region to run later in February, and we have also received positive response about other factors, for example such as accommodation capacity," Olsson said.

Clashing with the Winter Olympics, which is hugely popular in Sweden and other Nordic countries, would have been disastrous for the rally organisers who depend on ticket sales and live TV scheduling, which would also have not been possible if the event clashed with the Olympics.



Sweden bosses hunt the snow

LATVALA WINS PRAISE FROM TOYOTA WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP BOSSES

Jari-Matti Latvala was the right man to lead Toyota's factory World championship attack.

That's the view of team founder Akio Toyoda who used the post-Rally Monza celebrations last month to praise the Finn, who retired from full-time driving to take over from Tommi Makinen as the Toyota team principal for the 2021 season.

"Jari-Matti, who was also a driver, is a leader who always puts drivers first," Toyoda said. "All the drivers were able to finish the season with smiles because all the judgements were made from a driver's point of view. He hates to lose. He does as much as I do, or maybe more than I do. I believe his judgements based on this 'hate-to-lose' mindset made the team strong. I really appreciate his thorough communication with team members [and] for realising the driver-driven team and family-like yet professional team which we had been aiming for.

"This team kept making the Yaris WRC stronger since 2017. What I asked for at the first rally in 2017 was to make the Yaris WRC the strongest at the end of the season. The Yaris WRC has run 59 events in these five years, and we learned a lot from the events we won and we lost. The team did make the last Yaris WRC the strongest ever. I'm really happy for that."

Toyoda confirmed that development of the Yaris Rally1 challenger "is reaching its climax", adding the team is "extremely busy". "We will prepare an ever-stronger Yaris and make our fans even more excited from next season," Toyoda added.

Welshman Elfyn Evans and Kalle Rovanpera will lead Toyota's WRC line-up in 2022 with team returnee Esapekka Lappi and World champion Sebastien Ogier sharing a third entry. Development driver Takamoto Katsuta will contest a full campaign alongside Irish co-driver Aaron Johnston.

Jari-Matti Latvala (c): High praise

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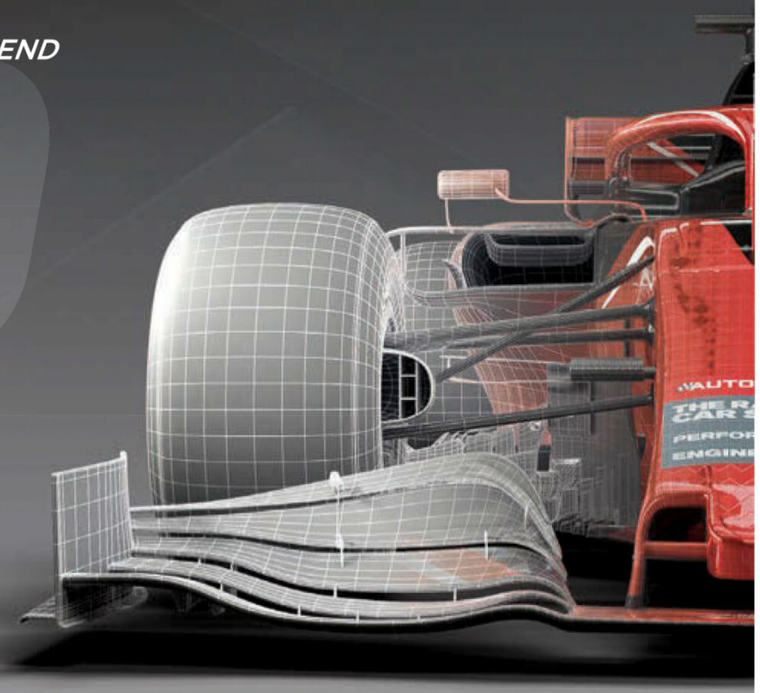

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RALLY NEWS

FRESH LOOK FOR ASPHALT SERIES IN 2022

Asphalt series gains circuit round as part of 2022 refresh, while classic events return

By Luke Barry

Next year's Asphalt Rally Championship – rebranded ARC – will include three brand-new events for the series across an extended seven-round calendar, visiting a race track for the first time in its history.

Oulton Park joins the calendar as the season finale in November, concluding a season that begins in March with the North West Stages. The expected trip to Scotland for the Jim Clark Rally then follows before a return visit north of the border for the Argyll Rally.

The Down Rally in Northern Ireland returns to the calendar for the first time since 2019 before a new event in Rali Bae Ceredigion. The Three Shires Rally is the penultimate round before the trip to Oulton. The Cheviot Stages will act as reserve event while competitors will carry their best six results from the seven rounds to their final championship total.

Launching the calendar new ARC championship manager Darren Spann said: "It is fantastic to be able to announce such a spectator and competitor-focused calendar, which allows us to move the ARC into a new chapter. I'm certain that 2022 will see an excellent championship."

CALENDAR

2022 Asphalt Rally Championship

DATE	EVENT
Mar 19	North West Stages
May 27-28	Jim Clark Rally
Jun 25	Argyll Rally
Jul 23	Down Rally
Sep 3-4	Rali Bae Ceredigion
Sep 17-18	Three Shires Rally
Nov 5	Oulton Park

Photo: Jakob Ebrey, Roy Dempster

Classics return and new challenges await ARC contenders in 2022

Mellors topped out on the last running of Grizedale back in 2019

MELLORS TOPS FINAL FOREST ENTRY LIST OF THE YEAR

Ollie Mellors will look to close out a trying season with a win on this weekend's Grizedale Stages, the final UK forest rally of 2021.

Proton Iriz R5 driver Mellors won Grizedale the last time it ran, in 2019, but his 2021 campaign was marred by a huge Nicky Grist Stages accident. All of 2019's podium finishers return in 2021 with Jock Armstrong and Stephen Petch seeded in the positions they were classified two years ago.

As ever, with the Grizedale not featuring in any major championship, the entry is nicely varied.

Englishmen Ian Bainbridge and Thomas Preston will be up against Scotsmen John Wink and Michael Binnie, while another contender for success is David Henderson who is in search of some good fortune in his Ford Fiesta R5. Action gets underway with one stage on Friday night before five further tests on the Saturday.

TOP 10 SEEDED ENTRY LIST

Grizedale Stages

SEEDED	DRIVER/CO-DRIVER	CAR
1	Ollie Mellors/Max Freeman	Proton Iriz R5
2	Jock Armstrong/Cameron Fair	TBA
3	Stephen Petch/Michael Wilkinson	Ford Fiesta WRC
4	Ian Bainbridge/Will Atkins	Skoda Fabia R5
5	Elliot Payne/Patrick Walsh	Ford Fiesta Rally2
6	Thomas Preston/Carl Williamson	Ford Fiesta Rally2
7	Russ Thompson/Stephen Link	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
8	John Wink/Neil Shanks	Hyundai i20 R5
9	Michael Binnie/Claire Mole	Mitsubishi Lancer E9
10	Phil Pickard/Simon Pickard	Ford Fiesta S2000T

SRC ANNOUNCES EXTENDED 2022 CALENDAR

The Scottish Rally Championship will comprise eight rounds in 2022 as the Carlisle Stages steps up from reserve event to full championship status.

The Cumbrian event became this year's season finale after the Snowman, Speyside and Jim Clark rallies were cancelled by the pandemic.

All three cancelled events from 2021 return for the new season before the Argyll, Scottish, Grampian Forest, Galloway Hills and Carlisle rallies. Six events are on gravel with rounds three and four (Jim Clark and Argyll) on Tarmac, meaning that the SRC remains the only major mixed-surface national series other than the British Rally Championship.

SRC chairman Roy Campbell said: "With normality on the horizon, the SRC is delighted that all eight event organisers have booked their place in the 2022 championship and we are looking forward to another safe and exciting year."

CALENDAR

2022 SRC

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
Mar 5	Snowman Rally	Inverness
Apr 23	Speyside Stages	Elgin
May 29	Jim Clark Reivers Rally	Duns
Jun 25	Argyll Rally	Dunoon
Jul 23	RSAC Scottish Rally	Moffat
Aug 13	Grampian Forest Rally	Banchory
Sep 10	Galloway Hills Rally	Castle Douglas
Oct 22	Carlisle Stages	Kielder

SRC stars such as Jock Armstrong (above) have full schedule ahead

DUKERIES TO GET NEW STAGE SECTIONS

The new stage routes for the Dukeries Rally have now received the green light from Motorsport UK ahead of the battle this weekend.

The event, the third round of the Motorsport News Circuit Rally Championship, will feature new sections of smooth gravel tracks on the Donington Park infield at the end of each competitive stage.

The paddock and service area will be open to spectators throughout the day.

The competitive stage route of the Dukeries Rally now totals 55 miles and is split into six separate stages.

The event starts at 0915hrs on Sunday. Advance ticket sales offering a sizeable saving can be purchased via the Donington Park website.

Henry heads the charge to Shackleton during the Festive period

TOP NI TALENT FOR TURKEY RUN

Maiden City Motor Club's Turkey Run Rally will take place on December 29, with the single-venue event already attracting a number of top drivers.

Based entirely within the confines of Shackleton outside Ballykelly, the rally will be played out over five special stages totalling 35 miles.

Shackleton has become home to both the club's Dog Leap and Turkey Run rallies in recent times. Desi Henry, winner of the Dog Leap in August, returns to the former RAF airbase to battle lead entries Joseph McGonigle and Cathan McCourt in a brace of Ford Fiesta Rally2 cars, and Derek McGarrity who intends to take part in a 'Plus' version of Skoda Motorsport's Fabia supermini.

Dukeries gets a refresh for 2021

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RALLY NEWS

KILLARNEY HISTORIC RALLY: BY MARTIN WALSH — NOVEMBER 27

Photos: Motorsport Images, Martin Walsh

Maximum attack from Breen delivered victory on Killarney guest appearance

KILLARNEY FALLS TO WRC ACES BREEN AND NAGLE

Classic BMW action for the M-Sport stars delivers dominant win

M-Sport WRC team leaders for 2022 Craig Breen and Paul Nagle shared a BMW M3 to take a resounding victory on the Killarney Historic Rally.

The pairing set fastest times on all but one stage on an event comprising a double loop over the three iconic Irish stages of Molls Gap, Ballaghbeama and Caragh Lake.

The flying BMW finished 57.1 seconds ahead of Alan Ring/Adrian Deasy in their ex-Ari Vatanen Subaru Legacy, with the Ford Escort of Cathan McCourt/Liam Moynihan, 1m33.7s further behind in third.

Spectator numbers were high for the event and parking issues caused a 30-minute delay on a cold but dry morning. When proceedings got underway, Breen immediately seized an advantage of 33.9s over Ring and Jonny Greer (Sierra Cosworth), from the opening pair of stages, although the latter driver dropped out of contention with engine issues.

McCourt (Ford Escort Mk2) became the new third-place man followed by Donagh Kelly (BMW M3) and Denis Cronin (Ford Escort Mk2), who were both credited with McCourt's time when they encountered Ray Breen's stricken Subaru. The winning driver's brother had cartwheeled into the Kerry scenery, luckily, neither he nor co-driver Podge Newe were injured.

Organiser: Killarney & District Motor Club **When:** November 27 **Where:** Killarney, County Kerry **Stages:** 6 **Starters:** 155 **Championships:** Irish Tarmac Historic Championship & The Kingdom of Kerry Rally Series.

Results

1 Craig Breen/Paul Nagle (BMW M3) 49m17.5s; 2 Alan Ring/Adrian Deasy (Subaru Legacy) +57.1s; 3 Cathan McCourt/Liam Moynihan (Ford Escort Mk2) 2m30.8s; 4 Donagh Kelly/Rory Kennedy (BMW M3) 2m54.4s; 5 Eamonn Kelly/Paddy McCrudden (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m24.0s; 6 Neil Williams/Anthony O'Sullivan (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m31.0s; 7 Denis Cronin/Helen Sullivan (Ford Escort Mk2) +3m48.2s; 8 Gareth Lloyd/Sion Williams (BMW M3 E30) +4m27.7s; 9 Philip Wylie/Lewis Dunlop (Ford Escort Mk2) +4m53.1s; 10 Duncan Williams/George Williams (Ford Escort Mk2) +5m15.9s.

ROAD RALLY ROUND-UP

Worthy winners in latest Targa events

Worthy Farm, home of the Glastonbury Festival, provided the venue for the Great Bustard Targa, won by Huw Morris/Alan Williams.

The pair only hit the front on the last test after their main rivals hit problems.

John Davies/Nick Bloxham had led for most of the rally and entered the final test with a lead of 48 seconds, but they then took a wrong route, missing a PC and dropping to third.

Second-placed Dan Morris/Geth Johnson made the same error and finished in fourth. Ethan Davies/Dan Johnson, who had been also in contention, suffered a puncture.

Thus Morris/Williams moved up from third to secure the win. Gavin Roger/Georgina Clark survived a clutch cable failure to take second place; they were one of the few crews to complete the event without any test faults, while the Clubman Rally was won by Gary White/Peter Littlefield.

It was a Clubman crew who were the fastest of the day on the Knutsford Targa Rally: Dewi Jones/Ceri Hicks taking the win. They finished 12s ahead of the winners of the Inter Club Rally, Christian Parker/Molly Livermore.

Top seeds, Owain Bedwyr Rowlands/Phil Sant retired their Mazda MX-5 with a failed clutch.

Ian Mills

Results

Great Bustard Targa

Organiser: Salisbury & Shaftesbury Car Club **When:** November 20 **Where:** Glastonbury **Championships:** ASWMC & CMSG **Tests:** 10 **Starters:** 53.

1 Huw Morris/Alan Williams (Ford Focus) 1h02m14s; 2 Gavin Rogers/Georgina Clark (Ford Escort) +52s; 3 John Davies/Nick Bloxham (Ford Puma); 4 Dan Morris/Geth Johnson (Puma); 5 Chris Woolley/Jamie Woolley (BMW E30); 6 Gary White/Peter Littlefield (BMW 318Ti); 7 Keith Lane/Martin Lane (Ford Ka); 8 Ethan Davies/Dan Johnson (Ford Puma); 9 Rob Field/Andy Fields (Toyota MR2); 10 Paul Freeth/Mark Dunkerley (Rover 214).

Class winners: Semi-Experts: Elliott Sharp/Michael Spicer (MG ZR); Novices: Mark Greedy/Paul Stowell (Citroen C2); Clubman: White/Littlefield.

Knutsford Targa Rally

Organiser: Knutsford & District Motor Club **When:** November 21 **Where:** Three Sisters Circuit **Championships:** BTRDA, EMAMC & ANWCC Tests: 15 **Starters:** 53.

1 Dewi Jones/Ceri Hicks (Mazda MX-5) 31m47s; 2 Christian Parker/Molly Livermore (Subaru Impreza) +12s; 3 Neil Raven/Claire Raven (Citroen Saxo); 4 John Fox/James Opie (Renault Clio 182); 5 Phil Matthews/Karl Ellis (BMW 318Ti); 6 Paul Redford/Darren Roberts (Mini Cooper); 7 Dyfrig Glyn Evans/Dylan Sion Richards (Ford Escort); 8 Alex Willan/Katie Willan (BMW 316i); 9 Max Hughes/Osian Davies (Ford Ka); 10 Peter Clegg/Sarah Clegg (Vauxhall Corsa).

Class winners: Experts: Hughes/Davies; Novices: Stephen Price/Julian Broadhurst (Peugeot 206); Clubman: Jones/Hicks.

DUGGAN'S ESCORT-HONDA COMES GOOD

Local ace Rob Duggan's faith in his radical Honda-engined Ford Escort Mk2 was repaid with a dominant class win on the Killarney Historic Rally.

The new car had suffered gremlins on its first appearance at the Kerry Winter Rally earlier in the month, but Killarney veteran Duggan, winner in 2019, was determined to press onward with the project.

In the end, five of the six stages fell to the potent new machine. His eventual margin of victory was 1m05.7s over the Escort-dominated field.

"It's nice to be back in the modifieds," Duggan said. "The historics was good last time out but I think the modifieds is where we are at home.

"We still had problems up until scrutineering. There are still a few bits and pieces, but it can't be too bad to be at the front of the field here."

Force to be reckoned with: Duggan took a landslide class win with Honda-powered Escort Mk2

Elliott (9) follows Busch (18) into a Nitro RX guest appearance

ELLIOTT TO JOIN NITRO RX SEASON FINALE

NASCAR fan favourite Chase Elliott will join Travis Pastrana's works Subaru team for the Nitro RX season finale in North Florida this weekend.

Elliott becomes the second NASCAR title winner to drive in the series after double champion Kyle Busch competed in last month's event in Phoenix.

As was the case with Toyota driver Busch, it is likely that the works Subaru, run by Pastrana's team, will be unbranded in order for Chevrolet-affiliated Elliott to drive. It will share the same sponsorship from NASCAR partner Ziprecruiter that was carried to fourth place in Busch's hands.

Elliott, the 2020 NASCAR Cup champion, is known as 'Chase from the same place' in deference to his father, 1988 Cup champion Bill Elliott, who is known as 'Awesome Bill from Dawsonville.'

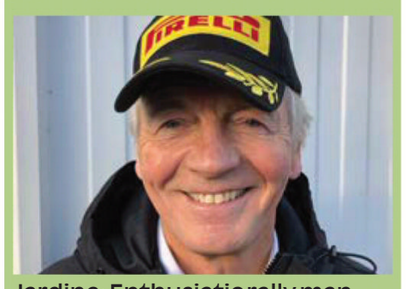
Looking ahead to the Florida clash, Elliott said: "I enjoy the challenge of trying out other forms of racing and have recently taken up dirt racing, so getting in a rallycross car is really appealing."

HISTORICS

DOWN THE PUB

TONY JARDINE

Avenger rallyist
Age: 69 **Lives:** Ascot



Jardine: Enthusiatic rally man

He started in racing
"I started racing in a Formula Ford and wrote it off at Oulton Park. So I disappeared off to the Middle East to try and get more money to come back racing again. I got introduced to rallying while I was in the Middle East, did the Kuwait Rally and came back and bought a twin-cam Escort."

He worked in F1
"I never used the Escort in anger as I went straight into Formula 1 with Goodyear and worked my way up to team manager and all the rest. I came back to rallying very late in about 1982 with a Hillman Avenger, which was my first rally car. So it has now come full circle. I love Avengers."

He's done many Wales Rally GBs
"My first RAC Rally was in 1991 from Harrogate in a Toyota and we finished 49th. It was snow and ice the whole way that year. Between all the other things we're involved in, I try and do two or three rallies a year, with Wales Rally GB as a minimum and two or three nationals if I can. I've done 26 or 27 Rally GBs."

Back in an Avenger
"I did the Roger Albert Clark Rally in 2004 and 2005, once in an MG ZR when I crashed on the first day and the second one in a Skoda and we finished. This year was my first time in a proper historic car, and back in an Avenger which is my own car."

It was a big challenge
"The car started with Tim Tugwell, who is an Avenger specialist, and then he gave it to Eliot Retallick at 3D Motorsport who has built a new engine and finished it. 3D Motorsport ran it on the Roger Albert. It was a huge deal to do the rally and it was the biggest event on the UK calendar this year. It is like it once was: the forests of England, Scotland and Wales across five days."

His entry was carbon neutral
"We need to put back in what we are taking out and be responsible competition drivers. The carbon offset programme with NET-HERO is very simple to use and you can say how many miles you want to offset and we're saying to the competition world, let's be responsible. We were one of the only teams that had carbon-neutralled everything about doing the rally."

Photos: Martin Walsh, Paul Lawrence

BREEN PREPARES SIERRA RS500 AS A TRIBUTE TO MEAGHER

M-Sport's new recruit aims to restore a rallying icon

Blue and orange livery of Frank Meagher

By Paul Lawrence

World Rally Championship ace Craig Breen is having a Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworth restored as a tribute to his all-time hero Frank Meagher.

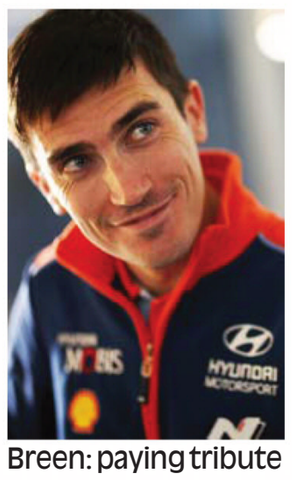
Breen has recently acquired the car and will hope to use it when his commitments with the M-Sport Ford WRC team allow. Breen was only two years old when Meagher won the 1992 Circuit of Ireland in the RS500 but says that when he was a child Meagher was his all-time hero.

"I have been so, so grateful in these past years to have been successful in my own career, but also for the opportunities it has presented me," said Breen. "I'm just a big bobblehatter at heart and it will be an emotional moment the first time I get to drive it."

The RS500 registered D934 SVW was originally a Russell Brookes car prepared by Mike Little's team and made its rally debut on the 1988 Scottish Rally when Brookes and Neil Wilson finished third overall. Brookes used it for the balance of 1988 and crashed out of the Lombard RAC Rally. Brookes then drove in on four gravel events in 1989 before Stephen Finlay used it in 1990, winning the Sligo Stages.

It then moved to Meagher for 1991 and early 1992, winning the Carlow Stages in '91 and the Circuit of Ireland at Easter in 1992 with Michael Maher co-driving.

Although it has most recently been in Brookes' Andrews Heat for Hire colours, Breen plans to have it reprepared in Meagher's 1992 Circuit of Ireland white, blue and orange livery.



Breen: paying tribute

PRYCE NEARLY SCUPPERED BY ULSTER ACCIDENT

Helpers got Pryce back on stages

Osian Pryce has admitted that his accident on the final round of the British Rally Championship nearly wrecked his plans to contest the Roger Albert Clark Rally.

Pryce was chasing the BRC crown in his VW Polo R5 when he crashed out late on the Ulster Rally, just five days before he was due to start the Roger Albert Clark in a Ford Escort Mk2.

Initially, Pryce thought he would have to withdraw from the five-day rally due to damage done to the Polo. However, friends and family rallied around and made it possible.

"After the mishap on the Ulster Rally and damaging the car, the R.A.C. was looking financially impossible and I'd decided to give it a miss," said Pryce. "Thankfully, a few people came forward and offered to help me and it was back on. People's generosity never fails to amaze me."

Historic Sports Car Club commits to rescue policy

The Historic Sports Car Club has reaffirmed its commitment to not using live snatching during qualifying sessions and races.

For the last three years the HSCC has not used this option and that policy has been renewed for the 2022 season. There has been recent media focus on the topic of live snatching cars from gravel traps and the possible risk involved for both officials and competitors.

HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne, who is also a senior clerk of the course, said: "I'm pleased to reaffirm that, once more, the HSCC will not use live-snatching during any of its race meetings in 2022."

HSCC TO MAKE A RETURN TO YORKSHIRE

The HSCC battlers will return to tackle Croft

A return to Croft in a 10-event schedule is one of the key elements of next year's Historic Sports Car Club's race programme.

Headline events include visits to the GP circuits at Silverstone and Brands Hatch, the Oulton Park Gold Cup and a mid-summer date at Donington Park.

New for 2022 are an additional one-day race meeting at Oulton Park and a return to Croft for the popular Nostalgia Weekend at the start of September. The season opens on the Brands Indy circuit (April 2-3).

In addition to its core events, the HSCC will again be the race organising club for Classic Silverstone (August 26-28) and the Walter Hayes Trophy at Silverstone (November 5-6).

IN BRIEF

Race Retro off
The promoters of Race Retro, the annual historic motorsport show scheduled for next February, have decided to postpone the event's return until February 2023. The ongoing repercussions of the Covid pandemic are cited as the reason for the cancellation of the 2022 edition. The 2021 event was also lost to Covid.

Walker for Grizedale
Providing his Ford Escort Mk2 emerges from the Roger Albert Clark Rally without major issues, Alan Walker will tackle the Grizedale Stages on Saturday as the top-seeded historic entry, with regular co-driver John Connor on the notes. Walker has contested the Lake District event once before and enjoys the challenge of the Grizedale complex.

Newall swaps sides
Andy Newall, one of the UK's leading historic race drivers and car preparers, will switch to rally co-driving on Sunday's Dukeries Rally at Donington Park. Newall, best known for success in an array of sports-racing cars, will take to the special stages of his local track to partner Martin Rumble in a Ford Escort RS2000.

Woe for Williams
Tony Williams was one of several drivers forced to withdraw from the Roger Albert Clark Rally after testing positive for Covid in the week leading up to the rally. His co-driver Richard Wise was gutted when their Ford Escort Mk2 entry had to be scratched after 14 months of planning.

BRM is sold
The second of three BRM P15 V16 'continuation' cars has now been sold to Richard Mille, owner of one of the world's biggest collections of original BRMs. The three 1950-specification cars are being built to exacting standards by Hall and Hall in Bourne and the first car has already gone to John Owen, son of the original BRM team boss Sir Alfred Owen.

Escort men reunited
Englishman Jerry Bailey and Northern Irishman Fintan McGrady, both running in Class D5 of the Roger Albert Clark Rally in Ford Escort Mk2s, finished one place apart on the 1992 Circuit of Ireland. After 380 stage miles nearly 30 years ago, Bailey's BMW M3 finished three minutes behind McGrady's sixth-placed Escort.

Huge LeJog entry
A field of 70 cars spanning 1949 to 1987 will contest this year's Le Jog, the Land's End to John O'Groats Reliability Trial. The HERO organised event travels the length of the UK, starting from Land's End on Saturday morning and covering a 1300-mile route before the finish at the northern tip of Scotland.

Prevot in the forests
Belgian co-driver Stephane Prevot, once a regular WRC competitor, contested the Roger Albert Clark Rally for the third time after a late call up to partner Miguel Henry de Frahan in a Ford Escort Mk2. When the intended co-driver broke his arm in the run-up to the event Prevot stepped in.

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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win
LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY
By Matt James
Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris.
From pole position, McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres. He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.
Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe.
The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."
Full report, p4
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COLUMNIST

JAMES ROBERTS

Our F1 correspondent is getting excited ahead of the grand prix season run-in

Photos: Motorsport Images

Throughout the last few months, countless folk have approached me to chat about this year's exciting Formula 1 World championship duel. Everyone agrees it's been thrilling to watch two exceptional talents go head-to-head and, more so, because it's a battle between rival teams. Then I'm asked, who do I think will win?

I think I've changed my mind as often as the title lead has swapped hands between Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton in 2021. And I'm still not sure.

In the summer I would have put my money on Lewis, because of his experience of dealing with the pressure of having a World title on the line. Let's not forget Max led the drivers' championship for only the first time in his career after this year's Monaco Grand Prix.

But following the victories in Austin and Mexico, Verstappen looked absolutely unflappable. The pace of the Red Bull was mighty and it didn't look as if Mercedes had an answer. Then we had Brazil. And the championship fight turned on its head.

Last weekend Mercedes boss Toto Wolff described the Saturday in Sao Paulo as the moment the sport had "woken the lion." After feeling a victim as a result of the stewards' decision to exclude him from qualifying for a tiny rear-wing infraction, we witnessed from Hamilton arguably one of the greatest drives in the history of the sport.

To recover 25 positions over one-and-a-third race distances – which included passing his arch-rival for the lead and avoiding his robust defence – was the strongest indication he is not ready to give up his crown without a fight. In the spirit of a true champ, Hamilton was immense in the face of adversity.

It was Verstappen's turn to pick up a penalty in Qatar, but he too was quickly back on the tail of his nemesis. Once again, as for all of this year, the frontrunners were miles ahead of the opposition. Formula 1 in 2021 has often had the feel of a super saloons race whereby the top two are racing in a different class of car to everyone else.

Verstappen is in new territory in the points lead

Hamilton has fought back in recent rounds

While the drivers have taken the competition in their stride and, in public at least, respectfully, the same cannot be said of their two teams: Mercedes and Red Bull. And more specifically, Toto Wolff and Christian Horner. They have provided a second narrative that has kept the off-track battle just as entertaining.

Throughout the year they have accused each other of various shenanigans that have kept the FIA busy, whether it's flexing wings, pitstop processes or driving standards and as the championship comes down to the final two races of the year, the pressure is sky high.

"What started as Olympic boxing went to pro boxing and it's now MMA. And the gloves are off," said Toto in the press conference in Qatar, where he was sitting next to the Red Bull boss. When quizzed about the relationship between the two, Horner replied: "I have respect for everything Mercedes have done but I don't need to go to dinner with Toto. I don't need to kiss his arse, but there are a few other team principals that might…

"Am I going to be spending Christmas with him? Probably not, unless he's in panto this year, then I might take the kids."

The next stage in this terrific contest is another trip into the unknown with a brand-new street course laid out on the corniche of the Saudi city of Jeddah. Having visited the site earlier in the year I can promise Baku-style high-speeds with unrelenting concrete walls.

Max can take his first title in Jeddah, if he wins the race with a fastest lap and Lewis is sixth or lower in the points. But after their dramatic crash on lap one of the British GP and the contact at Monza, the chances of one final clash between the pair feels extremely likely.

Both parties have said they don't want the championship to end in a gravel trap or in an FIA stewards' room but, given all the drama that has already occurred this year, you sense there is one final dramatic moment to come.

Given his points lead, you'd have to favour Max for the title, but it's impossible to discount Lewis. Whatever the outcome, let's hope this isn't just a one-off but continues in the seasons to come…

The flashpoints from 2021 might not yet be finished…

Simmering animosity: Wolff (left) and Horner

"The chance of one final clash between Max and Lewis feels extremely likely"

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WORLD RALLYCROSS

Photos: Red Bull Content Pool

WORLD RALLYCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP: NURBURGRING, GERMANY NOVEMBER 27-28

Timmy Hansen overcame the odds to turn up the heat in Germany

Kristoffersson won the opener and held his nerve for the crown

Four star: the champ is happy

KRISTOFFERSSON HANGS ON TO CLAIM A FOURTH CROWN

Johan Kristoffersson entered the final weekend of the series' 2021 campaign at the Nurburgring with a 17-point deficit in the points race to leader Timmy Hansen, but Kristoffersson drew level at the head of the standings by the end of the meeting. Having forced a tie, he duly claimed his fourth crown on countback.

After its scheduled World RX debut had been cancelled or postponed on three separate occasions over the last two years, the legendary German venue finally hosted rallycross' top-flight for a double-header season finale. The meeting was held in the most wintery conditions ever experienced in the championship's history.

Cold weather turned to snow on Friday evening ahead of the first day of action. The circuit, incorporating part of the Nurburgring Formula 1 layout, had to be swept of the white stuff before running could get underway in round eight on Saturday. The World RX machines cleared the track further through Free Practice, and by the time Q1 got underway, it was Kristoffersson who took the first fastest time in the opening qualifier.

Five drivers entered the penultimate points-scoring round with a mathematical chance of claiming the title, but Niclas Gronholm's hopes took a hit in Q1 with a poor start. He set the fastest lap when he did finally get going. Less fortunate still was French veteran Herve Knapick, who had a huge accident in his Citroen DS3 having hit a kerb, meaning a precautionary trip to hospital for the driver and a substantial delay in proceedings.

Q3 was dropped and when Q2 finally got underway, it was Gronholm who smashed in the fastest time. The star of qualifying, however, was Yury Belevskiy. The Euro RX3 champion, making his World RX debut in an EKS-built Audi S1, set the second-best time in both runs, including passing both Kevin Hansen and Kristoffersson in Q2, to qualify second. Points leader Timmy Hansen could only manage fourth, in part due to a five-second penalty for a move on Belevskiy in Q2.

Kristoffersson and Belevskiy both won their semi-finals to lock out the front row of the final. While Kristoffersson made a good start, Belevskiy dropped into the pack. Charging from further back on the grid, Enzo Ide and Timmy Hansen made contact with the rear of Gronholm in the rush to Turn 1, a tight right-hander.

The incident forced Gronholm wide and out of realistic contention, but up front Kristoffersson delivered a masterclass in challenging conditions to claim victory, scooping the maximum 30 points available from the day.

Timmy Hansen finished second, with Belevskiy third but the Russian driver was promoted a position – as was Krisztian Szabo behind – when both Hansen and Ide were disqualified from the final for the Turn 1 incident.

That ruling closed the margin between Kristoffersson and Hansen to four points heading into the final day of both the season and the era of internal combustion engine Supercars at the sport's top level. A frantic final day lay in store as the championship switches to electric technology for next year.

All three qualifiers were completed on Sunday without any delays. Timmy Hansen stopped the clocks first in Q1 initially until Kristoffersson nicked the best time in the final race of the session. Going head-to-head, Kristoffersson then lost out to Hansen in Q2, but it was Kristoffersson's EKS JC team-mate Ide who took a career-first fastest time to top the order. Kristoffersson then came out top of the first corner squeeze in Q3 to take the race lead and top the Intermediate Classification ahead of Timmy Hansen, closing the drivers' standings gap by another point heading into the semi-finals.

Flanked by Ide, Kristoffersson led the first semi-final from the front, and while Timmy Hansen won semi-final two, it came after more Turn 1 contact with Gronholm. Having qualified for row one of the final, Hansen was handed a seven-second penalty for the incident, dropping him to a row three start for the final. The end result meant he led the standings by only a single point.

Hansen's front row position was taking by his brother and team-mate Kevin Hansen, who had stalled on the start of the semi-finals on Saturday and not made the final. This time, in the grippier Q2 position than the pole, the younger Hansen made the best launch and took the race lead into Turn 1. He was chased by Kristoffersson and Timmy Hansen, who climbed to third at the opening turn.

The two title protagonists took their joker on the first lap, Kevin Hansen taking his compulsory extra route the next time around to cover off Kristoffersson, allowing Gronholm and a returning Guerlain Chicherit through.

Knowing that just finishing ahead of Timmy Hansen would be enough to take the crown, Kristoffersson tucked his Audi S1 up behind Kevin Hansen's Peugeot 208. Timmy Hansen's pace began to fade throughout the encounter without an answer for those ahead.

Gronholm, who had broken windscreen washers and couldn't afford to joker into traffic, took his extra route on the final tour and maintained his advantage to claim his third win of the season, while third behind Kevin Hansen was enough for Kristoffersson to claim the drivers' title.

For the second time in three years, the World RX drivers' standings concluded with a tie at the top of the order. In 2019, Timmy Hansen had prevailed over Andreas Bakkerud on wins countback, but this time he lost out with Kristoffersson – the latter had three victories to Hansen's two.

The Hansen team did however claim the teams' title on the final day of the campaign, but it was Gronholm who secured third in the overall standings, ahead of Kevin Hansen.

RESULTS

World Rallycross Championship
Round 8 and 9 When: November 27-28 Where: Nurburgring, Germany

P	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
Round 8			
1	Johan Kristoffersson	Audi S1	3m44.666s
2	Yury Belevskiy	Audi S1	+4.644s
3	Krisztian Szabo	Hyundai i20	+5.077s
4	Niclas Gronholm	Hyundai i20	+5.751s
DSQ	Timmy Hansen	Peugeot 208	
DSQ	Enzo Ide	Audi S1	

P	DRIVER	CAR	TIME
Round 9			
1	Gronholm	Hyundai	3m40.557s
2	Kevin Hansen	Peugeot 208	+4.031s
3	Kristoffersson	Audi S1	+4.259s
4	T Hansen	Peugeot 208	+5.480s
5	Guerlain Chicherit	Renault Megane	+8.759s
6	Ide	Audi S1	+16.091s

RX2e: Guillaume De Ridder (RX2e)

DE RIDDER SIGNS OFF WITH A ELECTRIC CLASS VICTORY

Guillaume De Ridder entered the final round of the all-electric RX2e campaign – run as a single event over two days – with a nine-point advantage in the standings.

It was the Belgian driver who took the fastest time in Q1. Thereafter, however, it was his nearest challenger in the points, Jesse Kallio, who set the best times in Q2 and Q3. British 17-year-old Patrick O'Donovan then took a career-best fastest time in Q4.

Pushing hard throughout, but caught out by contact a number of times at the opening turn, Kallio won the first semi-final. De Ridder nevertheless matched Kallio's score with victory in semi-final two, all-but securing the crown.

O'Donovan meanwhile, in a fight for third in the overall standings, lost out to better joker-playing strategy in the first semi. He then had a huge moment, his car flying over a kerb at the finish of the race and denying himself a place in the final line-up.

In the concluding race for this season of the electric category, De Ridder made the best start from second on the grid and never looked back. Fittingly, he led throughout to finish in style.

Kallio held nothing back but missed out on the title in second on the road, while third for Pablo Suarez ensured third in the overall standings for the Spaniard, just ahead of O'Donovan.

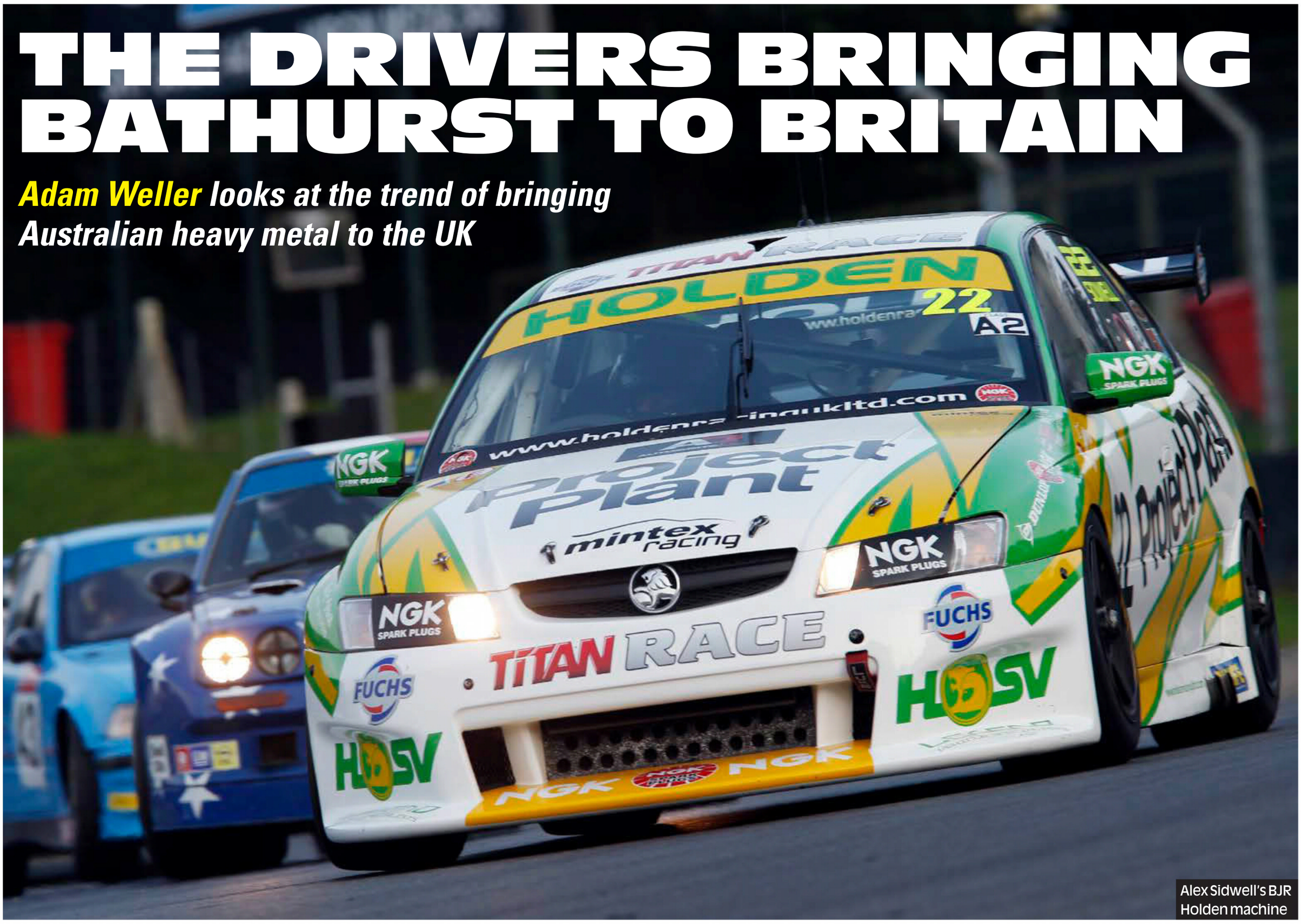
De Ridder went from the front row to claim the electric crown

Advertising enquiries: 01732 446757

FEATURE

THE DRIVERS BRINGING BATHURST TO BRITAIN

***Adam Weller** looks at the trend of bringing Australian heavy metal to the UK*



Alex Sidwell's BJR Holden machine

Rumble in the park: Ric Wood enjoyed his Holden in the 2021 season

Alex Sidwell added an ex-Greg Murphy car to his stable in 2014

The Bathurst 1000 takes place this coming weekend, and will no doubt be a scorcher of an event courtesy of its push back to December, the southern hemisphere's mid-summer.

Watching this year's event on the famous mountain will undoubtedly feel like looking into another world in the small winter hours here in the UK. However, one could argue that the spectacle of the Aussie V8s has never felt closer than in recent seasons, courtesy of three national racing stalwarts: Ric Wood, Andy Robinson and Alex Sidwell, who own 10 authentic Supercars between them.

Bringing these cars over to the UK is not a new concept – Wood even brought over a Holden Commodore VS in the late 1990s – but there has scarcely been an opportunity to see as many of the cars running in tandem on these shores.

The man with the largest collection of cars is Alex Sidwell, who today owns seven Holden Commodore V8 Supercars. His journey started in 2009, with a Holden Commodore VZ – chassis HRT047 – which raced with the factory Holden Racing Team and Paul Weel Racing before coming to the UK.

Sidwell, his Holden Racing UK team and the VZ would find a home in categories such as the BRSCC Euro Saloons & Sportscar Championship once they began racing it in 2012.

The varied field of cars at the time included Ginetta, TVR and Marcos GT cars, SuperTourers, four-wheel-drive Japanese firepower from Mitsubishi and Subaru, as well as another V8 Supercar; the Ford Falcon AU belonging to Andy Robinson.

Cheap as Chips

Robinson – much like Sidwell – took on his first V8 Supercar in 2009. His Falcon AU – chassis PWR01 – had come over from Australia as a rolling chassis courtesy of Graham Nash. Upon arrival to the UK, Nash graced the engine bay with a spare unit from another of his programmes, the seven-litre Ford Windsor engine from a Saleen S7R GT1.

This car would then be joined by a second Falcon AU, also from Nash: chassis PWR04 – powered by its original five-litre motor – in 2013.

> ***"The V8 cars were cheap - at the time..."***
>
> ***Andy Robinson***

Owing to wear and tear from hard lives in the UK, partaking in Britcar events including the Silverstone 24 Hour, Robinson managed to secure both of his cars for well under the typical price. He says: "They were both cheap. Both of them needed a rebuild, so they were just over £20,000 each, really cheap at the time! But mind you, they were both horrible cars when I got them, after years of endurance races."

Speaking of his early years running the car in the Euro Saloons, Robinson recalled: "I do [look back at the series fondly]. Back in those days I either won, crashed or something fell off the car. I never had a boring weekend. Those SuperTourers used to make their time up on the brakes, they'd gain back what I made up on the straights, and more. And then someone like Dave Cockell [in his four-wheel-drive Ford Escort Cosworth] would be so much quicker out of slow corners with all of that traction. It was great fun."

By the time Robinson had started to bring out his second car, Sidwell's shopping list – and garage – was expanding, starting with the successor to his VZ, the VE. Sidwell says: "I had heard the VE was meant to be a much better car to drive; not so difficult, not so slippery. We started looking at where we could get one, and we ended up speaking to [then second-tier Supercars driver] Geoff Emery. We ended up with our ex-Greg

Photos: Motosport Images, Gary Hawkins, Mick Walker

Ex-Craig Lowndes car rips up Brands Hatch

Robinson was invited to Goodwood Festival in 2015

Murphy Tasman Motorsport car, chassis TMS001, which arrived at the end of the 2014 season."

Car of the future

While TMS001 settled in with its new owners, changes were afoot in Australia. The 2013 season had the introduction of spec chassis, electronics and many other control parts for the Car of The Future, bringing them closer to NASCAR and the NGTC era of the British Touring Car Championship.

It wouldn't be too long before Holden Racing UK received yet another signed-for delivery from the land down under, in the form of a Commodore VF. Chassis BJR001 – built by Brad Jones Racing – arrived on these shores in late 2019, and has since been joined by a pair of similar cars built by Garry Rogers Motorsport.

According to Sidwell, the most noticeable difference at first is the newer car's driving position: "In the earlier cars you are sitting with your arm on the door, as you would in a road car. And with every progression of the chassis, they've moved the driver further and further inboard."

And for that fact, Sidwell is undoubtedly thankful. A collision to the right-side door of the BJR001 VF at Silverstone in August brought his 2021 season to a halt early, but he walked away practically unscathed, something that would have been a less likely outcome in an earlier car. The chassis itself was badly damaged, however.

He comments: "With the VF, you're sat much further left, almost in the centre. That's obviously a lot better if you have a moment like I had at Silverstone. It's going back to Brad Jones in Australia, and we probably won't see that car again until 2023. That kind of thing can be a drawback if and when you sell them, because if the repair is done in the UK by someone who's not recognised in Australia, you wipe massive value off of the car. It made more sense to send it to Brad."

Beyond his own collection, Sidwell was also responsible for brokering a deal between Brad Jones and Ric Wood, which meant another VE Commodore – an ex-HSV Dealer Team car, chassis WR008 – arrived on our shores at the end of 2018.

Wood has since been a regular in the Classic Touring Car Racing Club's Thunder category, along with both Robinson and Sidwell, and an exciting moment came at Brands Hatch in April 2019. Wood took the victory in his car, just ahead of Sidwell and Robinson, meaning an all-V8 Supercar podium in the Kentish countryside.

Talking about his car, which originally raced in 2008 and was extensively restored before purchase, Wood says: "It is the fastest steel-bodied saloon out there. In years to come, I think these will be the cars people want, more so than the spec chassis cars that followed."

While Wood's spend to purchase the VE was roughly equivalent to buying a second-hand GT3 car, the cost of running the Commodore is far lighter: "The mileage between engine rebuilds is something like 7500km, and I'm on something like 1500kms – exciting kilometres, mind you. I've probably got another five years before having to think about a rebuild.

"The engines are so well-developed. As long as you look after them, they look after you."

Smiles for miles

Regarding budget for a season compared to some of the non-V8 Supercar competition in the CTCRC Thunder category, Wood believes his car is well up there in the bang-for-buck stakes: "I'd say it might actually be cheaper [to run]. What have I spent on my car? Oils, fluids, race fuel and tyres. That's it. Since I've got the car, have I spent more? Probably a lot less! A lot of the parts can be found here, too.

> **"If you look after them they'll look after you"**
>
> **Ric Wood**

BRAND ALLEGIANCE A WORLD APART...

In Australia, the Ford vs Holden battle is a thorough split within the car community, with little room for bipartisanship; you don't have to look hard to find stories of family rifts developing over a defector in a Holden or Ford family.

Here in the UK, the group of regular owner/racers speak of each other's cars and each other in friendly terms. And, in the case of Ric Wood, he would struggle to claim his heart bleeds Holden red while manufacturing his fabulous Zakspeed Ford Capri builds.

With Wood on neutral ground, the question was posed to Alex Sidwell first: would a Ford ever be a viable addition to your collection? "That ship's long gone. I'm far too invested in over £500,000 worth of cars, to suddenly change brands.

"And we're now very well known in Australia for being the Holden people in this part of the world. If anyone wants to broker a deal, or wants to talk to people about cars, we're probably the best people to talk to and find the best value; you'll end up spending a lot of money if you go straight to the likes of Triple Eight."

As for Robinson? Given the opportunity, he wouldn't need much convincing to reach across the aisle. "I would [have a Holden]! Christ, of course I would! I'd rather have a Ford all day long, but if it was coming along for the right money, I'd definitely own a Holden– just don't tell Alex that!"

Andy Robinson says racing a Supercar is a "dream come true"

The AP brakes, for example, are English.

"These cars are built to do the job. You imagine, to develop them, how can you compete with 50 experts who've probably been building these for 30 years? Yes, we could put our own spin on things, but it's still a quick car; I don't want to devalue it by changing things. A lot of the parts can be found here, so as they are, they're not scary to run at all – quite the opposite."

Robinson's assessment of his own car maintenance and routine lines up with Wood's thoughts. When asked if it feels like buying the car for its cheap-as-chips sub-£30,000 price tag all over again when a major rebuild is needed, he said: "No, I do most of the work myself. The engine's away now, Graham Nash still looks after that."

All three men have different stories on how their custodianships began and operate their somewhat similar cars in drastically different circumstances, but there's one shared thread that all three drivers are keen to preach.

"These cars, when you drive them properly, they are just 100% fun", says Sidwell. "And having so many of them here, often racing together, means heightened exposure for us and the series abroad. So many of our social media followers are from Australia; they love seeing 'their' cars running."

Robinson adds: "I didn't think I'd ever own one. I went to watch Adam Sharpe's car in Britcar, but it was for sale for £40,000 at the time, which was a lot of money. When I was a kid I used to watch Bathurst during the Group A era, so it's a bit of a dream come true."

Wood summises: "Every time I get in it, it just feels like home. It's special. I literally say to myself 'I love this car' before every out lap."

And, perhaps, we may see more of these cars out at once in the future. Sidwell's adult son is an avid karter who wants to have a drive, and regular Classic and Modern Motorsport Club Saloons sparring partner Rod Birley is also knocking on the Holden Racing UK door.

McLaren and United Autosports supremo Zak Brown has a Bathurst-winning Holden Commodore VE living in this country; maybe he can be convinced to come out and play, along with our current Oz Pack? It would certainly make an incredible sight, truly transforming the Craner Curves into The Chase at Bathurst for a moment in time.

Ric Wood: enjoys the V8 thrills

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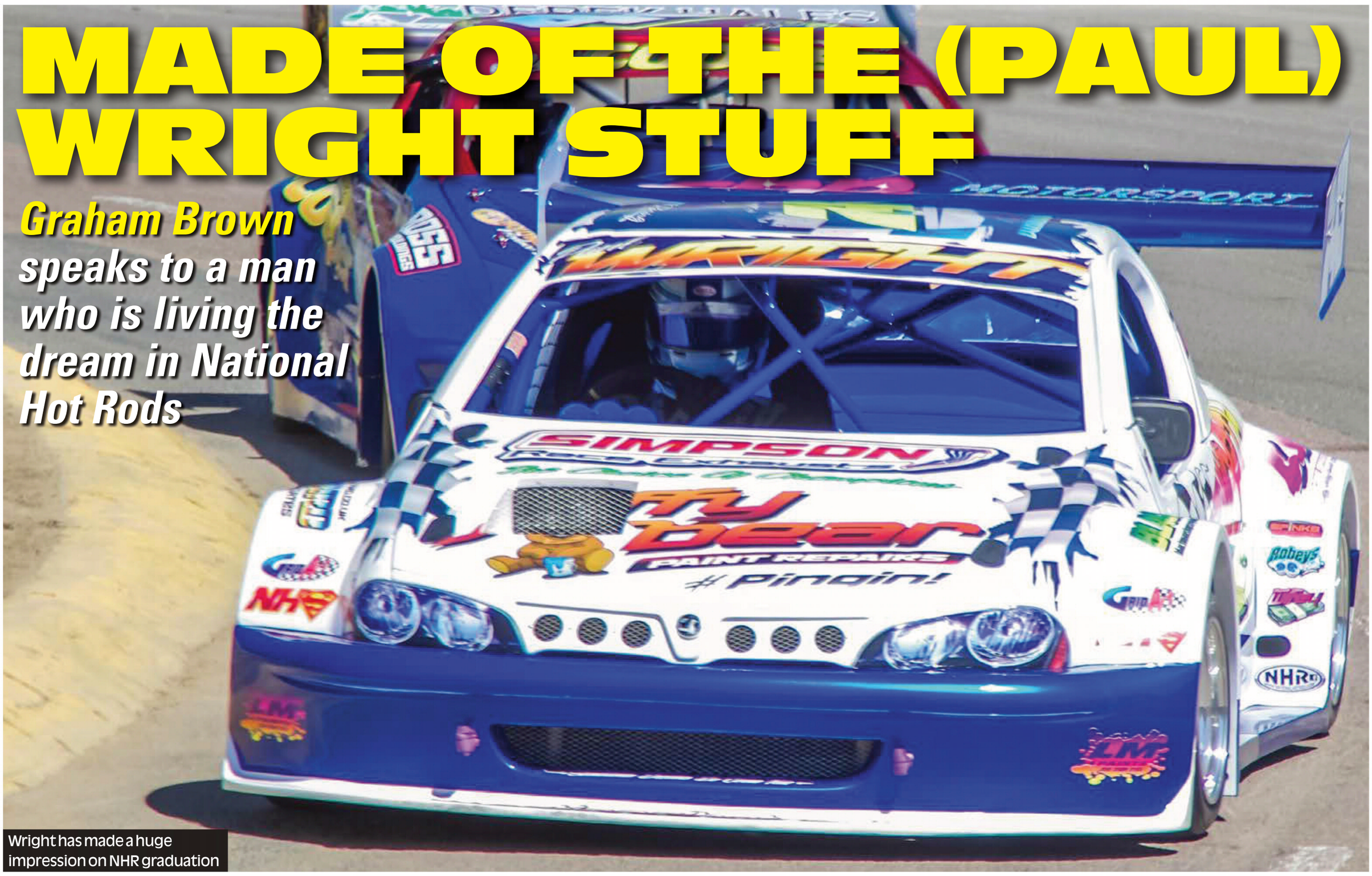
FEATURE

MADE OF THE (PAUL) WRIGHT STUFF

***Graham Brown** speaks to a man who is living the dream in National Hot Rods*



Wright has made a huge impression on NHR graduation

A hat-trick of wins has made the NHR regulars sit up and take notice

Prying eyes: Wright liked to keep his Vauxhall's secrets to himself

The American comedian Eddie Cantor once said it takes 20 years to make an overnight success. He might have been talking about National Hot Rod new kid on the block Paul Wright.

Followers of National Hot Rods probably knew he was worth watching after he won on his debut meeting. But, Rob McDonald's peerless title defence aside, after this year's World championship weekend was over the talk was all about Wright's hat-trick of wins, and how it could easily have been four but for some bad luck.

Many people would already have been well aware of Wright's abilities from his two decades in Spedeworth's 2.0 Hot Rods, but even that was nowhere near the start of his lengthy racing career.

"My earliest racing memory is Wimbledon, playing with the other kids – I'd have been about five years old," he remembers. "I can't recall my dad racing a Ford Anglia but I remember his Toyota Starlet at Ipswich, where you were so close to the track you could nearly touch the cars and feel them whistle past."

With that background, it was never going to be long before the youngster found his way onto some wheels himself.

"I had a motorbike when I was three years old – my dad had to put stabilisers on it. That was the start of my obsession with speed," says Wright. "At about 13 we started schoolboy Motocross and I won a championship in that. But one day I came off and smashed my pelvis. My parents being separated meant my dad had picked me up from my mum's absolutely sound and then brought me home on crutches. Mum said she didn't want me doing motorbikes anymore so my dad said 'It's time to build a car'."

The initial racer for Wright was a Ford Escort Mk2 Hodge Rod at Ringwood.

The virtually standard 1300cc machine was am immediate success: he won his debut race. Following his time learning the ropes in Hampshire, he switched to the Economy Rod category at Peterborough.

"When we finished that I was desperate to do a Spedeworth 2.0 Hot Rod," says Wright. "But I was used to Peterborough with its wide open turns and not that many cars. Spedeworth venues were a wake-up call, much smaller tracks with nowhere near the grip surrounded by post and cable fences and everyone was much more aggressive. It took a few meetings to get our heads down and start chipping away at it…

"We built a Peugeot 206 but quickly realised it wasn't the best move – you could have put a Vauxhall Nova inside it! So we sold that and got a Nova. It probably took 10 years' trial and error to get that car how we wanted it.

"In the end I still really wanted the 'new car' that everyone else had and I didn't – that was when we built the Peugeot 106. We got that on the pace pretty quick and won a few championships. But I probably stayed five, or even 10 years too long in 2.0s. But I knew NHRs were out of reach so you race what you've got or don't go racing at all."

Partners: Wright and wife Lucy

Wright had huge success with the Nova but the World championship crown was elusive. He came close, but the big prize slipped away.

Wright says: "I won something like 22 or 23 championships, the Best in Britain six times, and loads of others. But the World always escaped us. The fact that I couldn't afford to go to Northern Ireland meant that every time it was held there, I missed out. But we did go to South Africa. Luckily, I've got a generous Godfather [Jeff Simpson] who paid for my flights or that wouldn't have happened either. At Mahem Stadium in Pretoria they had six cars for us and the UK drivers drew lots to see who got which one. We worked hard to get that car as good as it could be and finished fourth – the only ones ahead of me were the three top locals."

But now the 2.0 Hot Rod has been

"I grabbed the NHR chance with both hands"

Paul Wright

Photos: mkpics.net

The winning habit has come easy for Wright

Welcome to Hot Rods: in the middle of the pack...

swapped for a National Hot Rod and he has taken the step into the big league. It was something that was in his sights, but there were hurdles to be overcome before he could make it into the top flight.

"It has always been a dream because I knew I couldn't afford it. People say it's not a lot more money than 2.0s but they are talking out their backsides," he explains. "If you do a meeting, put only one tyre on and have no damage, fine. But if you have engine trouble, damage a couple of wheels, or even take a corner off…it's massive. On a National, everything is four times the money.

"But then lockdown came along. It looked like a good time to sell my car – I'd already been saying 'I'm done with 2.0s; I've done it too long'. Then suddenly Lucy [Paul's wife] said she'd pay for an NHR car and I wasn't waiting to see if she offered twice. If I had four hands I would have used four hands to grab that opportunity!"

The Vauxhall has been thoroughly rebuilt and the secrets that Wright has applied to the machine remain firmly away from the prying eyes. He goes out of his way to stop rival drivers checking out the internals of the Tigra.

"When dad did my cars I was an 'arrive'n'drive' kind of racer with no mechanical knowledge. But once I became a teenager, I started to learn and then spent 20 years learning. When I started to do well I thought, 'I'm putting all this effort in and someone could just walk by and say, "oh I see what he's done"',' explains Wright.

"When I started nobody told me anything, so that was how the secret squirrel element crept in. Over time it's evolved from keeping the bonnet on whenever possible, to being a bit more than that. Oddly enough, I don't think anybody would necessarily see anything useful; there is no 'magic bullet' hidden under there. But if you've done a lot of work discovering something, why give it away?

"All that said we do want the fans to come and look at the cars. I always let people's kids sit in and have their photo taken because those kids are our future spectators. As for other drivers, go and look at your own car!"

After an intensive preparation process and testing, Wright was able to hit the ground running in National Hot Rods and was an immediate success, and that was something that even took the driver himself by surprise.

"Winning only my second race, I'll never forget that. It's the last corner, last lap, a lunge down the outside to take the lead, me in my new National, it's Ipswich, sun's out and it's a bank holiday. If you were to write that as a movie script no-one would believe it," he says. "I didn't necessarily expect the car to be that good but I knew it wasn't terrible because of the amount of effort and testing that we'd put in.

"My second meeting was the Thunder 500 and I was lying sixth in the final with John Christie behind me. We came to the last turn, and my engine went sick and John sailed by. My oil pump belt had snapped, destroying the engine. Luckily my very generous dad bought me another one for the following meeting at Buxton – and we had the throttle jam open in the first race, which was not ideal. I started at the back the rest of the day just in case. In the final I had the choice of whether to take that worry about it doing it again into the following round, or just get my foot down. So I managed a fifth from the very back, which turned a very bad meeting into a reasonable one."

Going into the prized National Championship meeting at Hednesford, the hopes were high but his charge was thwarted by a misfiring motor. He struggled through the heats and made it to the 75-lap final. His car improved as the event went on and he finished ninth in the showpiece race, which was a reasonable reward given the early dramas.

Wright had not qualified for the World Final at Ipswich in September, but victory in one of the pre-meeting events got him onto the grid as a wildcard. Success was a long shot, but he enjoyed his first attempt at the National Hot Rod world's blue-riband event.

"I was really looking forward to Spedeweekend because I love everything about it and the Nationals are in all their glory with perfect paint and new rims and so on," says Wright.

So far so good but despite having gone from non-qualifier to back-of-the-grid world finalist, any hope of a win from there was an extremely long shot.

"First of all, even just watching Nationals starting the World Final I get goose bumps. That music playing [*Sandstorm – Darude*] when they're on the warm up laps really gets your adrenaline flowing. I remember looking around the track, with my view pretty much what I would normally have when I'm watching – but I'm on the other side of the fence! I'm looking at all these cars ahead of me and it was like, come on, you've got 75 laps to race against this lot.

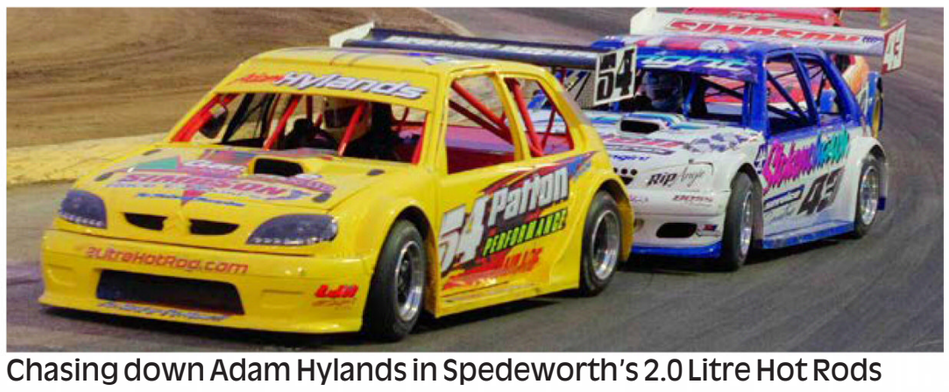
"But realistically I was thinking 'if I can just finish I'll be over the moon'. But then I get past a couple of cars and I find myself reeling in Aaron Dew. It took a long time to get him but I realise I am actually making progress. And then Adam Hylands and all these people that I've admired for years come into view and I'm racing them and passing them. People like Perry Cooke, who I think is a great driver for such a young lad, and Shane Murray, whose car was probably about a Ginetta-and-a-half wide at that point! I had to sell him a bit of a dummy to get by.

"Then I'm behind Ross McWilliam and he's behind Christie in his Lotus, a driver who I've looked up to for years… but I was struggling by then. I did something like 230 laps over the weekend and, remember, everyone else was fresh; they'd done their three laps and then had Saturday off. So I'm thinking, whatever you do, don't muck it up now doing something stupid to get past this one car! So I just sat behind him and finished 12th after starting 33rd. "What I didn't realise until after I had left the track was all the people clapping me as I came around Turn 4 – I couldn't hear them with my radio still on. But they told me when I got back to the pits and you don't get that reaction every time you go racing. But I was just doing what I do."

And doing what he does has turned many heads. With the National Hot Rod season on hiatus until early next year, there is plenty of time to ponder what might be to come. Wright is fourth in the standings and is within touching distance of leader Billy Wood.

"My philosophy is if I've got the car right I expect it to be quick enough," he concludes. "What I concentrate on is making as few mistakes as possible. And if we make fewer than everyone else, we might win." ■

The Tigra has been reworked



Chasing down Adam Hylands in Spedeworth's 2.0 Litre Hot Rods

Turning the dream into a reality

Rather unusually, Paul Wright got a drive in a top National Hot Rod prior to actually buying one when the Jason Kew team allowed him into the seat of its Tigra at Birmingham one afternoon in 2018.

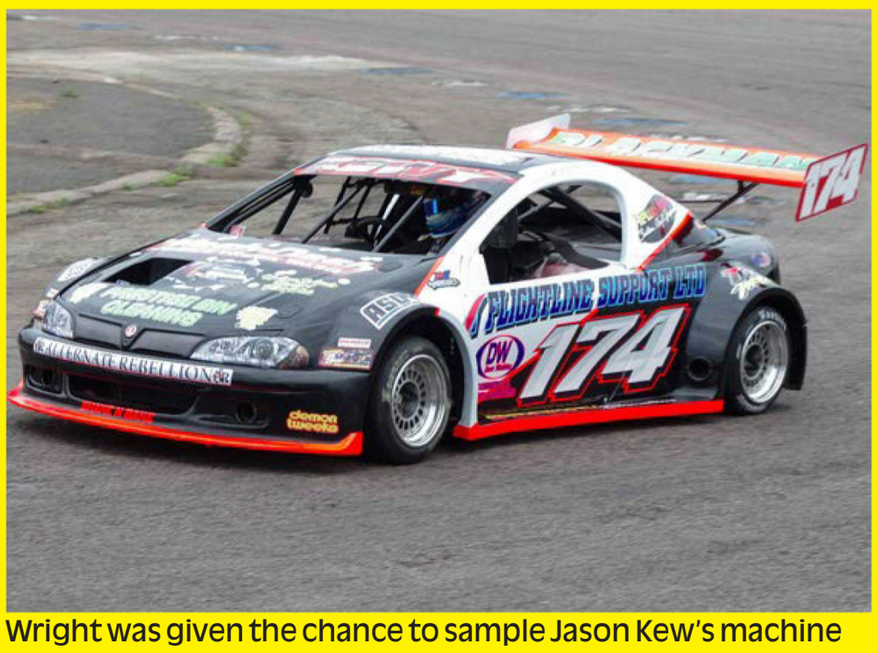
It was a rare chance of an insight into the top flight and it was arranged with the help of his wife.

"It was Lucy that did all the graft to get that set up," says Wright. "I think she'd been talking to Chris Haird, because I've known Chris since he was a 16-year-old lad when he was racing his dad's Ford Focus at Peterborough.

"And somehow the question got asked, 'Would Paul ever get to realise his dream and have a go in a National?' even if it was just in practice somewhere. As it turned out, Chris, Jason and Kerry Kew [good friends of the Hairds] said we could have a go in his car before a meeting at Birmingham in a paid practice session. I owe them a lot of thanks and will never forget that, because there were a lot of things that could have gone wrong."

The dream came true and Wright got a snapshot of the category he would later be destined for – although he didn't know it at the time.

"I wasn't going to drive it slowly and there wasn't a lot of time between the end of practice and the start of the meeting," he recalls. "They put a lot of trust in me that day. So that was a little dream come true as it was. Because, me being over 40 at the time, and our circumstances being what they were, I genuinely believed those 10 laps was the closest I was ever going to get. It was absolutely amazing to be actually driving one. And now to be able to say that we own one is just unreal."



Wright was given the chance to sample Jason Kew's machine

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FEATURE

CHRIS HODGETTS: STILL FLAT OUT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

The multiple tin-top champion and Le Mans participant tells Graham Keilloh about his racing adventures and developing the next generation of stars

Hodgetts passes his experience on

Chris Hodgetts is not one who can be accused of resting on his laurels. And he's gathered plenty of them across over four decades in motor racing.

He is a multiple champion in the British Touring Car Championship: twice overall and five times in his class, and he experienced all four of the contest's classes during the 1980s and with it pushed a wide variety of machinery to its limits.

Hodgetts has also taken part in no fewer than six Le Mans 24 Hour races, peaking with a seventh-place finish overall in 1989 in the screaming rotary-engined works Mazda. And, as we are to find out, he's done plenty more on and off track even over and above all of this, including racing in Japan, New Zealand and elsewhere.

And Hodgetts, who hits 71 years of age next week, to this day still has a vital hands-on role in UK motorsport and its future, as driver coach to some of its brightest young talents. His pupils include twice W Series champion Jamie Chadwick, 2020 Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion Harry King and new Porsche Junior Adam Smalley. As Hodgetts notes, he remains "flat out".

But let's start with his somewhat unlikely beginnings.

Question: Was he really a milkman when he started racing in Clubmans?
Paul Lawrence
Via Facebook
Chris Hodgetts: "One hundred per cent. [My] mother and father, they started a dairy business after World War Two, I grew up on a milk round getting up at 0430hrs helping my parents, yeah 100%.

"And I eventually inherited the dairy business, it was a retail bottle milk, mother and father built the business up and that in effect when I was karting managed to give us a level of being able to go karting at a reasonable level in the UK. But what you must remember, at that time there were no supermarkets or anything like that. When mother and father were retirement age they handed the business over to me, but the milk business selling milk to your doorstep was on the downward slope obviously because people like Tesco's open and the whole thing just melted away.

"So I handed it over to Birmingham Dairies and that was that, and with the small amount of profit that I made from it I bought myself my first Clubmans car. Yeah, perfectly true."

MN: Sounds like it turned out to be useful for your racing?

CH: "Well I was a milkman and that was it, wouldn't say it was useful for racing, but yeah that was the family business."

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images, Porsche GB

Hodgetts took second overall BTCC title in 1987

MN: And what was it like starting out in Clubmans racing?

CH: "Well at the time around about '78 a Formula 3 car like Nelson Piquet for instance who ran the grand prix circuit, a Clubmans A Class car could lap within a second of a Formula 3 car. And it was a far far cheaper alternative. You've got to remember I'm coming out of karting and 250 [cc] gearbox karts which were bloody fast and so really anything that hadn't got grunt or fear factor didn't really excite me so I bought a Mallock Mk17B, De Dion rear-tube rear-suspension car which was an ex-Frank Sytner car. I then bought an engine from a guy called Richard Groombridge, which was a dog, but when I was all through my infancy there was a guy called Jim Whitehouse who had a company called Arden Conversions in about Tanworth-in-Arden, about two miles from my house, and I used to pester Jim all the time and he'd looked after Steve Neal's Mini, I used to go and spanner Steve Neal's Mini and do his wheels up and do all sorts back in the late '60s and early '70s.

"And eventually I persuaded Jim to do an engine for the Mallock and that was it, that's how we moved on. Jim Whitehouse is probably the most influential person, well he's passed away now unfortunately, but in my motorsport career he is the one that actually made my career happen."

Question: Apart from Nick Whale, who was your favourite team-mate and why?
Nick Whale
Via Instagram

CH: "Simple that one, Keiichi Tsuchiya. [Laughs] That's a bit off the wall isn't it? Actually there's two, Keiichi and David Kennedy."

MN: So what about them stood out for you?

CH: "Well Keiichi because he was a cult hero in Japan and I raced an RS500 [Sierra] alongside him and David Kennedy was instrumental in me doing that because David Kennedy put me in the Mazda at Le Mans in 1989 and from that performance there and what he did for me that once again steered a lot of my career as well. Both good as team-mates, proper proper people."

MN sets the scene: Hodgetts in late 1988 and in a part-season in 1989 competed in a Brooklyn Motorsport Ford Sierra RS500 in the British Touring Car Championship's frontrunning Group A, taking a best race result of third.

Question: With a full season in the Brooklyn Sierra, what could you have achieved?
Chris Phillips
Via Twitter

CH: "Not as much as the Eggenberger or [Andy] Rouse cars purely because of the limited budget that we were running on, [and] the tyre contract that we were

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"Cult hero in Japan" Keiichi Tsuchiya (l) is one of Chris Hodgetts' favourite team-mates from his career

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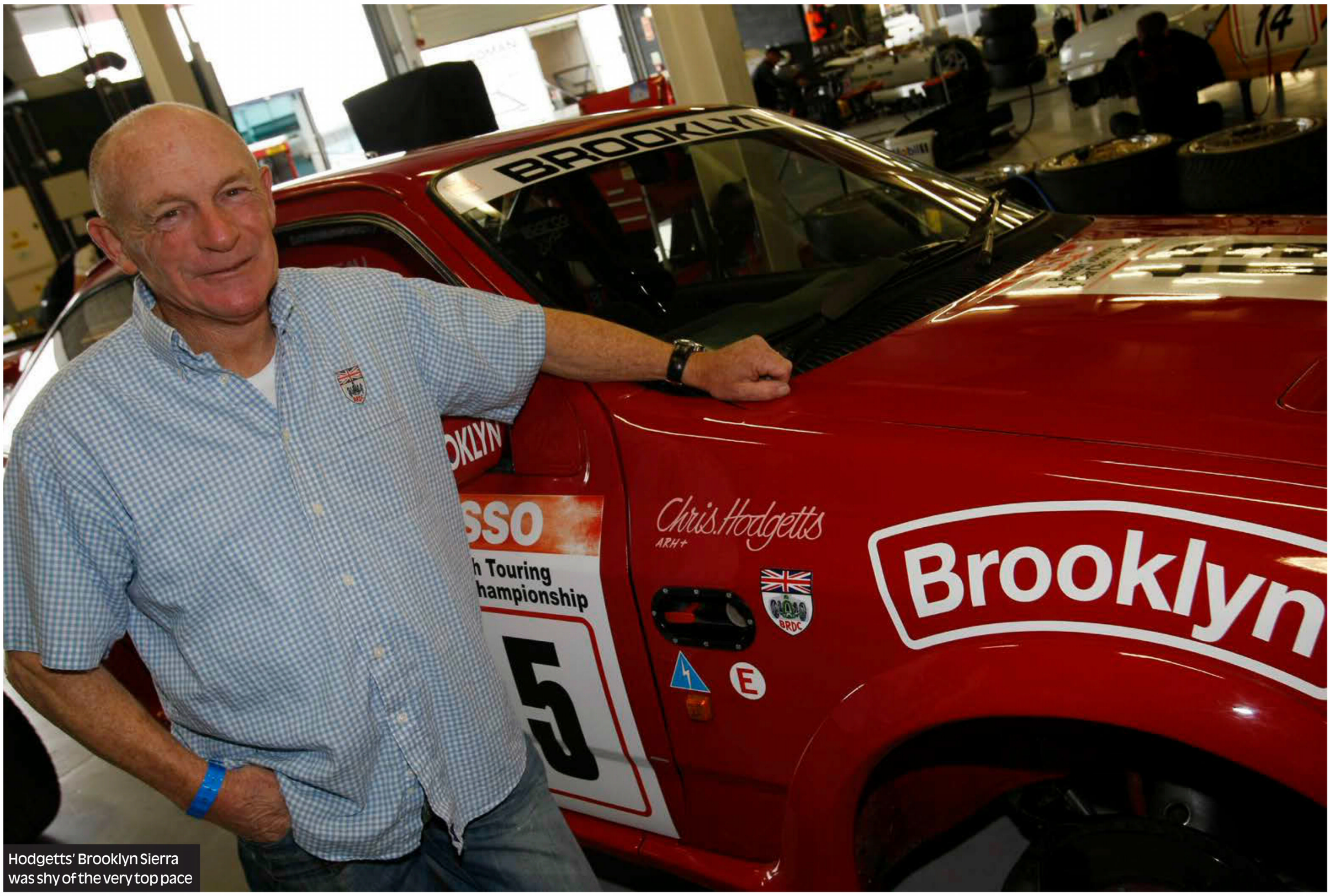
FEATURE



Hodgetts' Brooklyn Sierra was shy of the very top pace

obliged to stay with. So it would have been top six all the way through, hopefully with the odd podium finish, but realistically the car at that time didn't have the ultimate performance of the Rouse or Eggenberger cars but we were close."

MN: So what stopped you doing a full season in the Brooklyn Sierra?

CH: "Purely budget."

MN sets the scene: Some of Hodgetts' last BTCC outings were in a handful of rounds in 1990 racing a works Vauxhall Cavalier with John Cleland as his team-mate.

Question: What's the story with the 1990 Cavalier?

Touringcaruniverse

Via Instagram

CH: "[Laughs] Ooh OK, all from, let's say '86, '87 when I won the [overall British] touring car championship John Kirkpatrick at the Jim Russell racing driver school asked me to be one of the chief instructors at the school. And I spent 10 years, very very happy years at Donington Park with JK.

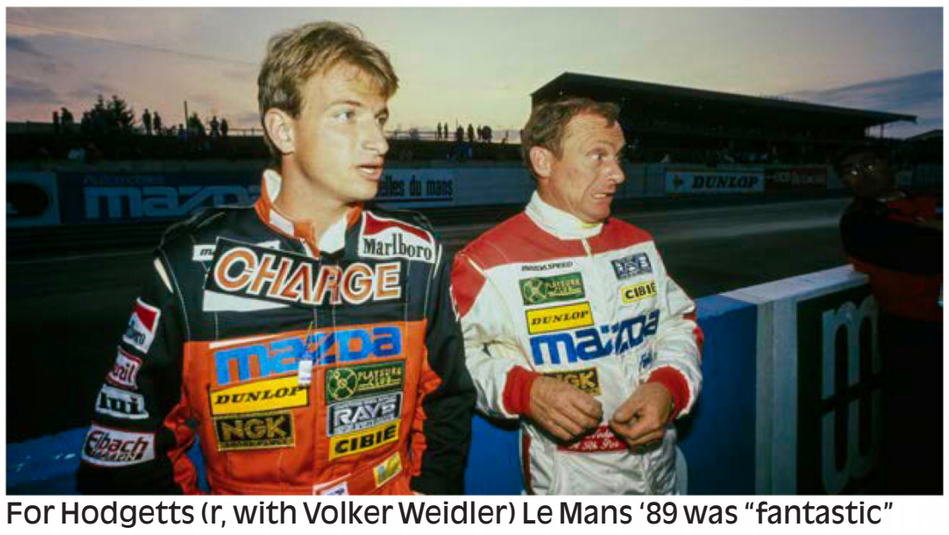
"They had a Vauxhall contract all done via [Vauxhall motorsport boss] Mike Nicholson and at the touring car times we're talking about Bill Cleland was the team manager of Dealer Team Vauxhall and we were running Vauxhall Juniors at the school and also a fleet of Cavaliers 4x4s and Astras, GTi Astras, so there's a big connection whilst I was working at the school.

"What happened was I was asked by Mike Nicholson to do development work behind the scenes because Mr Cleland had also got a Volvo dealership and a Vauxhall dealership together and he wasn't particularly keen on doing very much stuff like that so I was contracted quietly behind the scenes to develop, and Dave Cook built the cars, top top bloke Dave Cook, who I knew very well.

"And I was given the task of sorting out whether the four-wheel-drive option was going to work, the rear-wheel-drive option was going to work, or we stuck with the front-wheel drive because the Cavalier was homologated with all three permutations. So that was the story of Vauxhall, so I had to do, no I didn't have to, I thoroughly enjoyed doing the work behind the scenes and with the occasional race thrown in which unfortunately that opened a can of worms as well when I did some races for them but yeah, there we go [laughs]."

"After clouting the barrier I got £500 for the TV exposure!"

Chris Hodgetts



For Hodgetts (r, with Volker Weidler) Le Mans '89 was "fantastic"

MN: Again it was a part season that you did, so was that budget?

CH: "No I was paid to race properly then. No I was doing other stuff wasn't I? I was doing Group C, I was doing other things. Bob Berridge drove the car, the rear-wheel-drive one once or twice I think as well. I did Birmingham, I think I did Brands, but it was only just a selected few races that they wanted me to do, they'd already got their contracted drivers."

MN: I found on YouTube today, you mentioned Birmingham in 1990, you also won the TVR Tuscan support race?

CH: "I did yes [laughs]. What are you going to say about that one, anything or nothing?"

MN: It seemed you dominated the race but then had a bit of an interesting celebration.

CH: "I knew that was coming, how did I just know that was coming? That was at Halfords hairpin, Charlie Millington who was the car owner from the sportscar centre was sat with my son Stefan and Charlie's two daughters in the grandstand at Halfords hairpin and yeah I got on the marbles and we clouted the barrier and took the mirror off the right-hand side of the car and the big surprise with all of this is Charlie gave me £500 for getting some extra TV exposure!

"But I promptly got fined, I got fined £500 with, let me think now, I think it was either Jean Alesi [Alesi drove at Birmingham in 1988 and '89 rather than '90 so perhaps this was another year or another driver] and, who else was in the stewards' office with me? [Hodgetts racks his memory] Kurt Luby in the BMW, there were three of us in the office and we all got fined for doing donuts or basically poncing about so yeah that was the story of that one [laughs]."

MN sets the scene: As noted, in 1989's Le Mans Hodgetts finished seventh overall alongside David Kennedy and Pierre Dieudonne in a works Mazda.

Question: What was Le Mans in 1989 like with the Mazda?

Alex Cameron

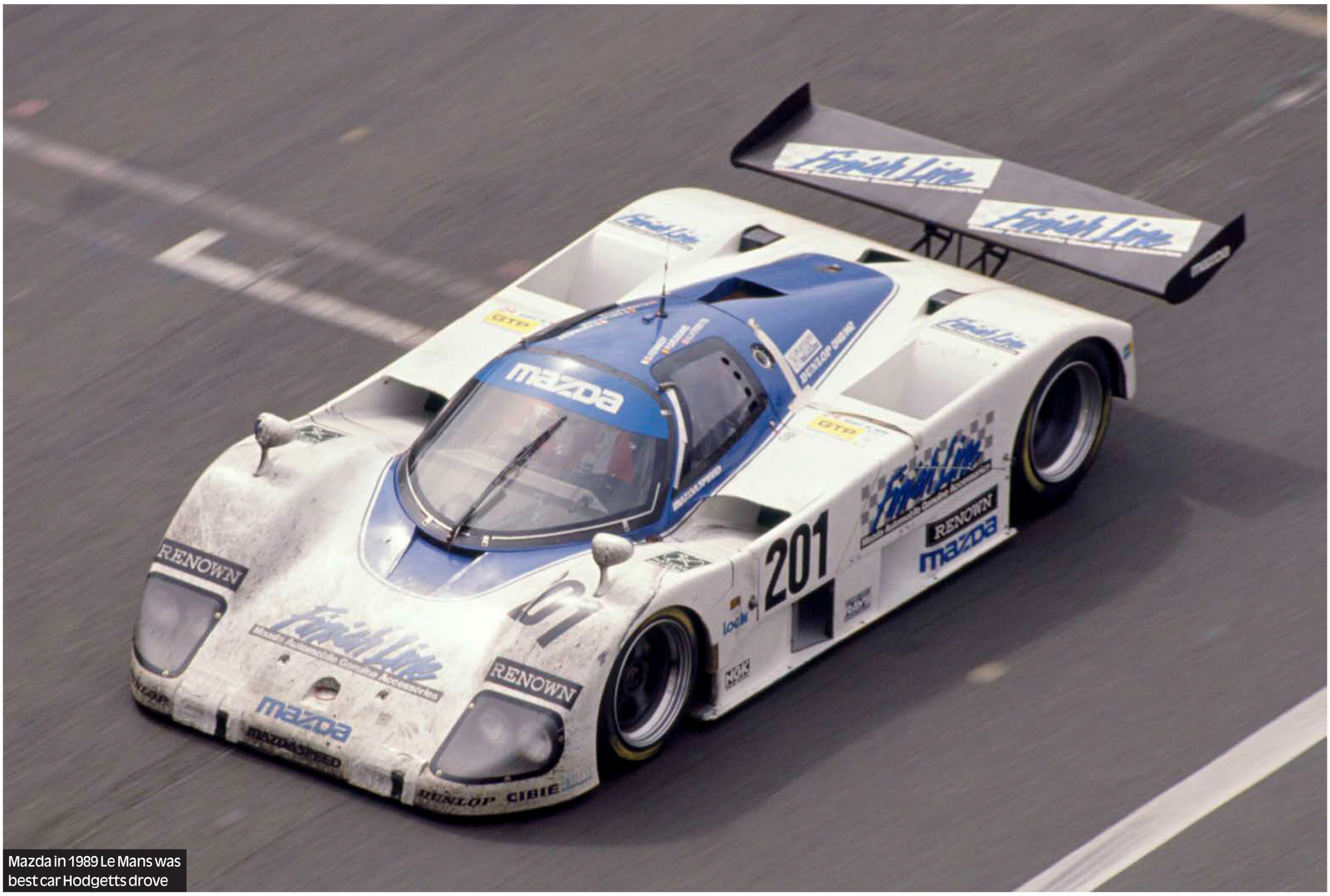
Via email

CH: "Best racing car I've ever driven, end of. The most efficient car for what it was designed to do in its specific race. There's lots of other racing cars that I thoroughly enjoy but the most amazing thing with the Mazda was how it just fitted like a glove into the event that it was designed to do and it was absolutely superb, yeah."

MN: So what was the event like being able to do it with a car like that?

CH: "It's the best race in the world, end of. There's nothing any better. It was fantastic, it was fully professional, Alan Docking ran a really good team, it was a shame that Oreca took it over afterwards but Doco [Docking] was absolutely superb.

"Nigel Stroud designed the cars, top top bloke, massive respect for Nigel, still in touch with him now even though he does vintage ploughing with his tractors, he's a good bloke. And because it was such a surprise and lucky break to get into that car for that event and how it



Mazda in 1989 Le Mans was best car Hodgetts drove

changed things for me in Japan as well the whole thing was just wonderful to be honest, wonderful."

MN sets the scene: In 1995's Le Mans Hodgetts drove with Tommy Erdos and Cor Euser in a Team Marcos Marcos-Chevrolet in the GT2 class, and retired after 132 laps with an electrical problem. It was Hodgetts' last Le Mans.

Question: Can you get him to talk about Le Mans 1995 in the Marcos LM600 with these blokes please! [includes picture of the Marcos with Hodgetts' co-drivers Erdos and Euser plus Chris Marsh from the sister car].

Gary Harman
Via Facebook

CH: "There were two cars running, in the other car was Chris Marsh, Francois Migault and David Leslie. I was pretty instrumental in the whole flipping lot of taking the whole shebang to Le Mans, I think we took 54 people.

"The car itself it was going to be lucky for it to finish anyway but you want to talk about the two team-mates. OK, Tommy Erdos, big mate of mine, proper bloke, working at the Jim Russell racing driver school in his early years trying to succeed. Got on brilliantly with Tommy, I got him the drive with Marcos, actually he did the British GT championship with us as well didn't he as a number two in the second car [in 1995]?

"So Tommy, we worked together at the school so we just got on, proper bloke. Cor, obviously very experienced, he wanted to do it, I'd spoken to him previously, good God, probably going back to when I was racing a Lola-Judd with John McNeil and I think he'd raced it at, when it was like the [Heinz-Harald] Frentzen car back in '91, '92 at Le Mans maybe, I'm not too sure.

"But I just wanted him in the car as an experienced proper guy and Tommy had never done it before so it would be all new to Tommy. So both good guys and Cor later on inherited or bought or whatever you like the whole Marcos thing and ran it very successfully out in Holland in Dutch championships and that."

MN: And it turned out to be your last Le Mans as well so did you want to do more?

CH: "No, no I was fine. What I learnt from it really is having done it with Mazda with a proper budget, being paid properly to do it, with a professional factory outfit, really there's no other way to do it to be honest.

"The gentleman amateur driver side of it became less, which is fine, no problem at all, there's still people doing it now, but for the event itself I'd seen a fair few shunts or whatever you like, or people hurt over the period of time and you get to a period in your life where you think well it's got to be worth my while doing it, it's got to be safe, got to be enjoyable and it's got to be professionally run and that's it.

"And really as I grew older my focus changed, turned more to the kart team that I was running with Stefan and that was pretty successful, and it's '95, '96, '97 when Stefan was doing top-level karting in the UK when he won the champion of the future thing in '97 so I was still working at the school, I was still doing other stuff.

"So no I didn't have a hankering to keep going back, once I'd done it with the ones I'd done it with I was happy and that's fine. I'm one of the guys, fortunate guys in motor racing, very very lucky and I don't have a chip on my shoulder, I don't have a feeling that I've still got anything to prove because I've done alright and I'm happy with that and that was it really."

Question: How did driving with Andrew Bagnall from New Zealand come about and did he enjoy racing in New Zealand?

Graeme Swan
Via Facebook

CH: "Oh brilliant, good question. OK, 1986 I won the British Touring Car Championship, and had to sell the car at the end of the year to stop myself going bankrupt, simple. Because it was a semi-Toyota GB deal, I made it happen God knows how but we did win the championship.

"At the end of the year I needed to flog the car and a guy called Andrew Bagnall bought the car from me, and promptly announced that he wanted to do the World and European Touring Car Championship with me and he would pay for it all utilising that particular car and he also bought the car that we'd built for Alan Minshaw, the Demon Tweeks car, which Alan didn't really get on with, and we used that for the first round at Monza

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David Kennedy (r) was another of Hodgetts' favourite stablemates

Hodgetts in 1990 helped to develop the Vauxhall Cavalier in BTCC

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FEATURE

Hodgetts won the 1986 British tin-top title, then had to sell the car

Hodgetts: "total star" Harry King deserves to become factory driver

Hodgetts has plenty to offer the racing stars of tomorrow

I think, which we won, won the class.

"And so Andrew, we built up a lovely relationship to be honest and that ran all the way through to the end of '87. I did Bathurst with him, I did Wellington street race with him which was probably the most enjoyable thing I've ever done to be honest touring cars-wise, we did Spa '88 and after that, that was it then. He wanted to spend all his time really in the southern hemisphere then, he'd sold Gullivers Travel which was his business and wanted to spend more time at home so that just eventually dissolved."

MN: Was Wellington the only time you drove in New Zealand or were there other times?

CH: "No no crikey, no no, the end of '86 that car, the British championship car went out to New Zealand. There were the two races very close to each other at Wellington, there was one in '86 at the end of the year and then there was a round probably late January in '87, I think, and I raced at a place called Pukekohe as well in New Zealand, we tested at Manfeild. I loved it, best country in the world, yeah loved it."

MN: So sounds like it was a good experience racing there?

CH: "Yeah, I love street circuits, a bit like Miami when I raced Bridgestone Supercar championship out there, and I raced IMSA as well, with Group C cars, well with the IMSA spec car, big Spice with a Chevy in it, factory car. I enjoy street races."

MN: So how did racing in New Zealand differ to the UK?

CH: "People. The whole experience was lovely. Got to remember when we done European Touring Car Championship, World Touring Car Championship at the time, there was people like Roberto Ravaglia, Johnny Cecotto, all good lads, [Steve] Soper, obviously [Tom] Walkinshaw with all his lot, with [Gianfranco] Brancatelli and Win Percy and everybody so it was a big travelling circus and it was really really fantastically enjoyable. I know we managed to throw Ravaglia into the bloody harbour at Wellington which brought out a lot of cheers from the TWR lot, they loved it."

Question: When you are coaching the youngsters, what's the most important trait you look for?
Duncan Horlor
Via Facebook

CH: "[Pauses] Got to think about that one. The ability to absorb information and implement it as quickly as possible. That's it really, for them to take onboard what I'm saying, implement it and I don't have to say it again.

"And I think you can go further than that because it's not just me coaching the drivers in racing cars, it's the things with maybe what I do with them, they have to have respect, enthusiasm, obviously the talent and the ability, and focus. There's lots of things to be honest, but first of all it was when I get in the car with them for them to be able to implement, put it into place what I'm asking them to do."

MN: So how often do you find that when you're working with a youngster?

CH: "Well I don't work with lots of youngsters, I work with a select few, I'm fortunate that way. And 90% of the youngsters that I've coached, you even go back to people like Jamie Chadwick etc, there's been some bloody good people in the car with me that's for sure that have gone on to good, great things actually, people like Harry King and that, they are proper. So with the ones I've worked with I've been fairly selective and they're all a pleasure to be with, fantastic."

MN: You mentioned Harry King, how far do you think he can go?

CH: "He deserves to go all the way to be a fully fledged factory driver, follow in the footsteps of people like [Tom] Kristensen, he's proper. He deserves to be a fully fledged factory driver for a manufacturer and placed all around the world because he is a total and absolute star.

"He can go all the way given the opportunity and position to be able to do so. He's actually at Aragon now, because he was put in by James MacNaughton [from] Porsche GB as a wildcard to get the [Porsche] Supercup scholarship."

MN: So what did you think about his Carrera Cup GB season this year racing Dan Cammish and people like that?

CH: "People don't realise how much pressure the lad's been under. What Harry was doing was obviously Supercup as well; [Team] Parker and Harry did Supercup as a first year for them as a toe-in-the-water exercise with the 992 [the car that is used in the Porsche Supercup and will be used in Carrera

> ***"I am eternally grateful for the life I've had in racing"***
>
> ***Chris Hodgetts***

Hodgetts' final Le Mans was in the Marcos LM600 in 1995

Cup GB next season]. The people that have been running out in Europe have done lots and lots of races with them, pretty big budgets and were very very experienced.

"Now the difference between the two cars, between the 991, the British car as such, we are a year behind everybody with the cars, [those in Supercup] have got 992s, they've [King and Parker] gone straight in there last year. And the difference in driving between the two cars is night and day so he was having to adapt very quickly from one to the other with minimal time, so he had to readapt to the British car [for Carrera Cup GB] with hardly any time to do so, and that's why his season this year was a little bit disjointed.

"But his ability in the car is beyond question and in my opinion Harry King has transformed the Porsche Carrera Cup in the last two years into something very very special and given the fact now that the grid's full for next year straight away, the interest in it, and it's all been created by Harry, that's my opinion.

"Him and Cammish, well Cammish should have bloody done it because he's been there and done before, he's got far far more experience and he was lucky, had Harry done the full British championship without Supercup then I think it would have been a different result.

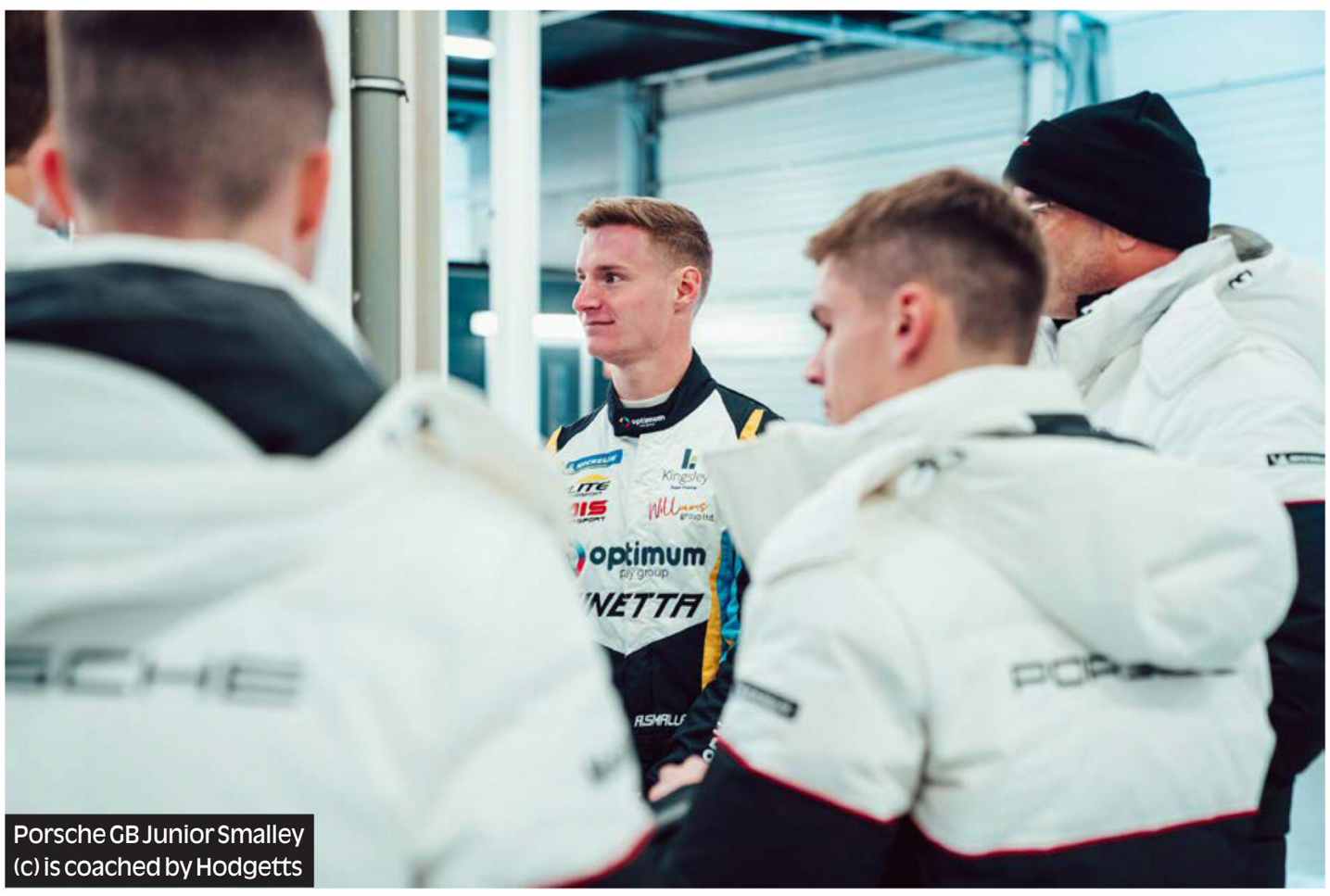
"And I've got Adam Smalley that's won the juniors [Porsche GB junior] now, he's one of mine as well, and I've got Will Aspin in Pro-Am, he was a [Ginetta] GT5 driver with us, with Elite Motorsport, he's doing the two-year programme with a 992, he's in Pro-Am for next year and then Pro for the following year [in Carrera Cup GB], then we're off to Portimao on December 7-10 to go testing.

"I am eternally grateful for the life I've had within the motorsport community, the friends I've made and still having the health and ability to be able to pass on my knowledge and experience to the younger generation that want to come into the sport in the hope that they can have a career as rewarding and enjoyable as I've had."

Question: Can he explain where his Mad Monk nickname came from…?
David Addison
Via email
CH: "Yeah [laughs], Jim Whitehouse, Arden Conversions, when I first started motor racing and a couple of others and Dave Lampitt from Spec Fab who's been an associate of mine, he built the cars when we won the touring car championship. I'd got some hair but I had a great big hole in the top of my head, and I'm a bit of a lively character I suppose and so Jim Whitehouse originally called me the Mad Monk and that's how it started [laughs]. How did Addison know that?"

Question: Will there be a Chris Hodgetts book?
Chris Phillips
Via Twitter
CH: "If somebody gives me 25 grand yeah. I've been that route, Chris Phillips wanted to get it all going. It's having the time and getting a publisher. I'd love to put a book together of course I would yes but I don't know how to properly.

"If the honest answer is ghost writers etc all that kind of thing fine but you want reality, it would have to be spot on with factual information. I think there'd certainly be a fair amount of humour and heartache and joy and there'd be plenty of emotion with a book. I've been a very very lucky lad. When I've spoken with other people with a few stories, they're not stories but just life's encounters shall we say, they all seem to enjoy listening to it all so I'd love to do a book but how and having the wherewithal to do it is beyond my comprehension at the moment."



Porsche GB Junior Smalley (c) is coached by Hodgetts

MN: So do you feel it's something you'd have to write yourself rather than as you say get a ghost writer or anything like that?
CH: "I don't know if I'd have to write it myself, I'd need help, I'd need big-time help with anything like that and with a certain amount of memory jogging shall we say? I haven't got time at the moment, I'm 71 [this] month, I'm flat out, I just haven't got time to sit down and write stuff, so I don't know."
MN: So is it your racing instructor work and things like that keeping you busy?
CH: "Oh heck yeah I mean crikey. Pre Covid I was in a Ginetta Junior or another race car 190 days out of the 365, in-car coaching. With Elite Motorsport the team that I'm involved with, with [team boss] Eddie Ives, we are flat out.

"I mean, we had two days at Croft which we've just had exclusive, I got today off if you can call it off, tomorrow I'm at Donington Park, then we've got a truck going straight out with all the single-seaters to Spain and they're running about four different venues and then we've got… no I'm just really really busy." ■

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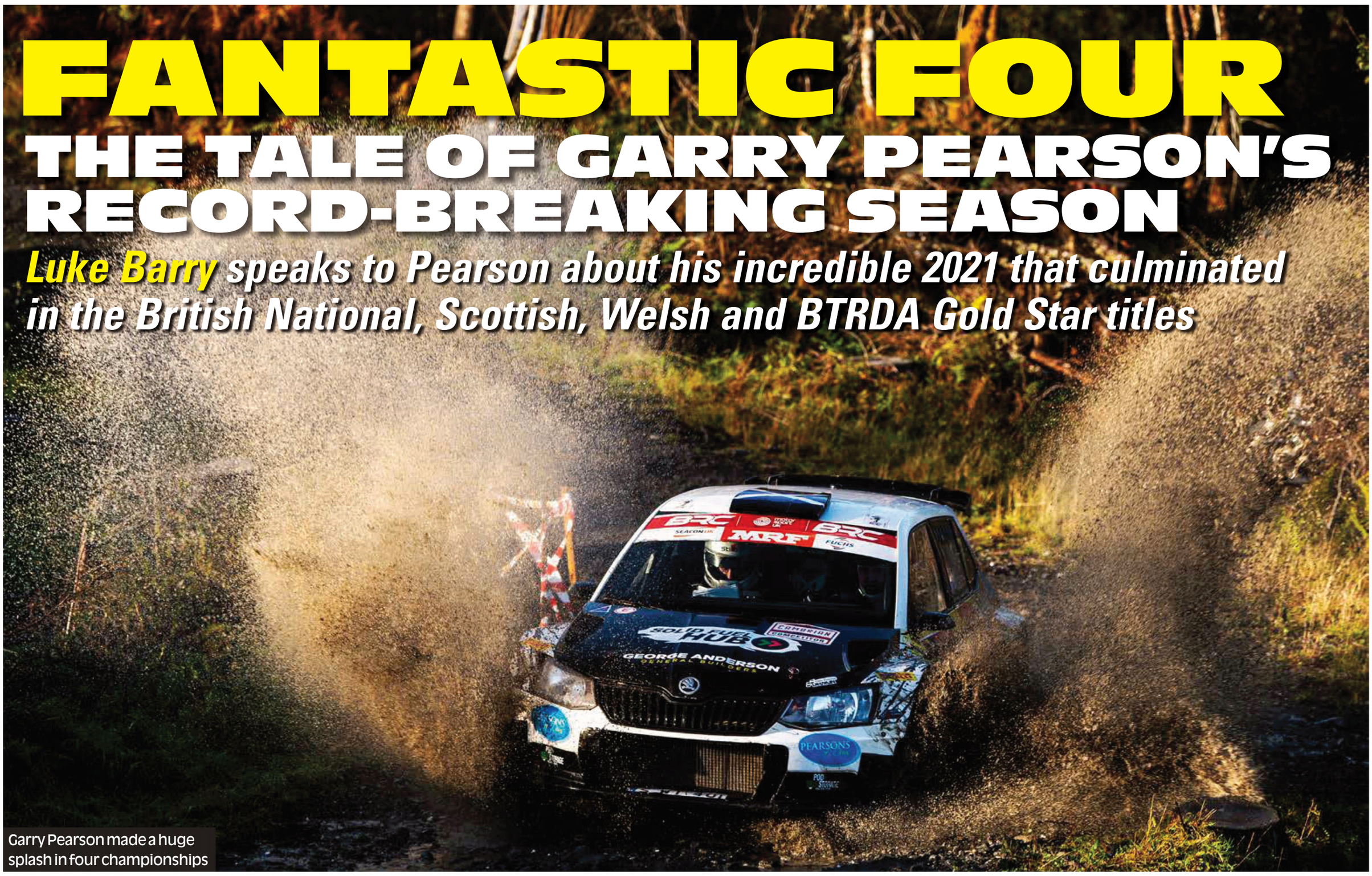
FEATURE

FANTASTIC FOUR

THE TALE OF GARRY PEARSON'S RECORD-BREAKING SEASON

***Luke Barry** speaks to Pearson about his incredible 2021 that culminated in the British National, Scottish, Welsh and BTRDA Gold Star titles*



Garry Pearson made a huge splash in four championships

Pearson soon realised that he was battling on four fronts in 2021

Parked up, drinking red wine and Corona supplied by a local after retiring on the first proper stage of the Argyll Rally in June, Garry Pearson wasn't thinking about titles.

"To be honest everything seemed against us at that point after that rally," he admits retrospectively. But as it turned out, Pearson would not only go on to win 2021's Scottish Rally Championship title but added this year's BTRDA Gold Star, Welsh and British Rally Championship National titles to his collection too.

It's not been without hard work. From Argyll in June to the Rallynuts Stages in mid-November, Pearson and co-driver Niall Burns entered a staggering 11 rallies in 20 weeks. By contrast, World Rally Championship crews did just six events in the same timeframe.

Pearson's initial plan was just to finally win the Scottish series – a title that's eluded him for years and most famously in 2016 when his Ford Fiesta R5's engine manifold broke ahead of the final stage of the season. And that Argyll retirement this year, where the oil filter came off his hired Ford Fiesta Rally2, "almost made me chuck the SRC."

But upon realising the next two Scottish events, the Scottish and Grampian Forest Rallies, crossed over with the BTRDA and BRC, Pearson mounted an unprecedented four-pronged attack that soon began to snowball.

First up was the Nicky Grist Stages in his own Mitsubishi Lancer E9, as the Scotsman split with the Dom Buckley RSC preparation firm. Pearson grabbed important BRC, BTRDA and Welsh championship points but his season wouldn't take off until the Scottish Rally two weeks later when he hired Dylan Davies' Skoda Fabia R5, but things didn't start all that smoothly.

"We went and did a test and I couldn't get in the car," Pearson, six foot four inches tall, recalls. "We spent three hours fitting me in the car, so I ended up getting four miles in the car before the event. Just everything was too tight." But, once underway, the potential was obvious. Despite a puncture and later getting caught in another competitor's dust trail, he romped to top BTRDA points and third in the SRC.

The Grampian was when Pearson truly hit top gear. "It basically got to about stage four and we were 11 seconds behind Jock [Armstrong], and it wasn't all or nothing but if we wanted to keep that Scottish championship alive, we just felt we had to go all out for it," Pearson says. "We were fourth and seventh quickest [overall] on the last couple of stages and just pipped Jock. Then from there for the Scottish it felt like 'shit, we've got a chance'."

It was then that Pearson's diary really began to fill up. With each strong result, each championship challenge was strengthened. On the Grampian for instance Pearson owned the BRC National class, but was it difficult to focus on two objectives with Armstrong to chase for maximum Scottish points but a clear lead to shield in BRC?

"I think the most difficult rallies came later in the year with that because when you had Trackrod and one was a National rally [for BRC] and one was an Interclub [for BTRDA and we were scoring in both championships], trying to track people's times got very, very confusing," he admits. "But to answer your question it didn't alter the mindset. We always knew we had to finish to remain in contention for any championship to be honest with you."

The Woodpecker Stages was the beginning of a brutal spree of four rallies in six weeks. But having never driven the stages before, Pearson won every single test to seal the win by 58s – a performance Pearson rightfully calls "probably my best performance of the year".

"It was a flat-out event," he remembers. "It probably suited my brave driving style, it was a very enjoyable rally and it was a bit of a blast. We kind of knew

Driving a Mitsubishi Lancer E9 on Mull was a challenge for Pearson

Photos: Jakob Ebrey

The Scot was at home in the Skoda Fabia

Garry Pearson says the Woodpecker was a highlight

everybody would be quick there so we just had to go for it on that one and that's one where we were probably as committed as we have been all year." It was a true statement of intent too and fed into the Galloway Hills Rally in Scotland where Pearson grabbed second behind David Bogie, but with Bogie not completing a full season finishing clear of Armstrong would do nicely.

The Trackrod would prove less prosperous, however. Pearson was leading both BRC National and the BTRDA until the penultimate stage where he was caught in Rhys Yates' wake after he stopped to change a flat. Then it got worse: "We lost maybe half a minute or something and lost the lead, so we were one second behind Callum Black [in BTRDA] going into the last stage," Pearson explains. "Then, there's a bung on top of the turbo which came out so we couldn't put it into stage mode, and we lost a minute." It dumped him to third in BRC and sixth in BTRDA.

Mull was up next, and to save costs Pearson was out of the Fabia and back into his own Mitsubishi. With main rival Stephen Petch absent, it was a golden chance to steal a march in the BRC. "I think we knew we had a job to do," Pearson says. "That was a hugely challenging rally, but I think one thing we can say for me and Niall is we've given everything that we can to each and every rally. We were out recceing the stages at four in the morning the week of the rally. We stayed in a motorhome for three nights and went out and recced all hours of the night, and I know other people do it but for us at that point of the season it was a big ask."

The pair were rewarded with the class win they craved despite brake problems and an excursion into the scenery before Pearson's first opportunity of a championship title presented itself on the Carlisle Stages, the SRC finale. "I did actually pull in a wee bit of extra support on the lead up to the rally where Robbie Mitchell and my father actually did a lot of the notes prep with me. I just put in extra more than you would think. But on the actual day, when people mention 2016, I've heard it that many times now that it doesn't really bother me anymore. But I knew on the first stage when we took 14s out of Jock that we were quite comfortable after that. I set back into a rhythm that was a safe rhythm and I knew that we could continue at that rhythm quite safely and not be bothered by Jock."

Championship one was in the bag, and just one week later at the Cambrian Rally the second crown was up for grabs. "We didn't want to go to Ulster, that would have cost me thousands. I'm so glad I didn't go, I was so tired," Pearson sighs in relief. Power steering failure on the penultimate Cambrian stage was a threat, but Pearson's lead was great enough that he held on and won a second title in as many weeks – calling it "probably my biggest accolade so far" at the finish.

Pearson had also topped the BTRDA and Welsh tables on the Cambrian, teeing him up perfectly to double his trophy haul on the Rallynuts Stages. The BTRDA points permutations were kinder, but to claim the Welsh title he couldn't afford to finish any lower than second if rival Black won. Like any good motorsport story, everything was thrown at Pearson in mid Wales as he bid to achieve the unthinkable.

The power steering failed on SS1 and spoilt his pace, before a fightback on SS2 was rendered useless as the stage was red flagged for his rivals and thus notional times were awarded, nullifying Pearson's attack. It was then "balls on the dash" on SS3 as Pearson "was probably pretty pissed off I hadn't taken any time back." The charge worked as he moved up to second and that was enough to win both championships, but then Pearson picked up a rear puncture on stage four and fell 27s behind Ian Bainbridge. That was fine for his BTRDA assault, but he needed to beat Bainbridge to take the Welsh title too.

He says: "I didn't really want to win one without the other, as ridiculous as that sounds. I wanted to win them both. I came to do a job. I have to say we probably took some risks we maybe shouldn't have. Going into the last one was had 10s to make up in four miles, so we just went for it again and took 12s out of him to beat him by two seconds, so we scooped the whole lot. It's never been done as far as I'm aware and I think it will be very, very hard for somebody to ever do that again which is pretty cool."

It certainly is a monumental achievement, one Pearson credits to the "really good bunch of guys supporting us, keeping us right and just believing in us" and all the hard work "that maybe people don't see that actually make a big difference to the finished product" that's "paid dividends in not one championship but four". He adds: "I think one thing I have learned this year is you can't afford really to take your foot off the gas. The Rallynuts was a prime example, if we hadn't have attacked the first mile of the first stage we wouldn't be Welsh champions just now. Things come up that you don't expect."

Asking Pearson which title means the most is perhaps like asking a parent to select their favourite child, but MN decides to do so anyway – and the clue is in the Saltire plastered on the side window: "The Scottish has always had a big place in my heart," says Pearson. "Dad won it in '94 as a co-driver, I'd always wanted to do well in it, and I was brought up on those stages in the 205 Challenge. I've always looked at Dave Weston, David Bogie, Euan Thorburn and that's where I learnt and watched so that one meant a lot."

And a word for Burns, the right-hand man who's guided Pearson through thick and thin: "For me there was no better man to come in and sit beside me. I think any question or any, I guess, demand that I've had throughout the year, like it or lump it he's sucked everything up and done it. Fair play to him he's been a great asset and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve next year."

Pearson is targeting a step up to the main British Rally Championship in 2022, budget permitting. But no matter where he goes next, he won't be forgetting his scarcely believable 2021 in a hurry. ■

> **"Scottish title is always in my heart"**
>
> **Garry Pearson**

Q&A: NIALL BURNS

The man who told Garry Pearson where to go...

Burns (l) and Pearson collect one of many bottles of champagne

Q: You've accomplished a lot in your rallying career but how do this year's achievements rank?
A: "Nothing comes close to this, it's just so surreal. I'm still not really sure it's sunk in. I always dreamed of winning championships and rallies but to win four in one year is just amazing, especially after having no rallies for over a year."

Q: This didn't happen by accident. How much work has gone into winning these four championships?
A: "A lot of work behind the scenes, especially as we don't get to recce, so a lot of hours spent on DVDs. Credit to Onthepacenote UK for providing us with top class notes all season. We also have such a good team behind us, they know who they are and they've really made all this possible."

Q: How was it sharing a motorhome with Garry on Mull...?
A: "I couldn't really tell you since he decided to book himself a one-bedroom cottage at the last minute and leave me outside in the camper! The poor fella couldn't bear going over there without his evening bubble baths."

Q: Is there any way you can do better than this in 2022?
A: "I don't know if we'll ever be able to top this but if anyone can it's Garry. He is an exceptional talent and I can't wait to see what happens next year."

PEARSON'S 2021 SEASON

The tale of a year of success

Argyll Rally
Series: Scottish
Car: Ford Fiesta Rally2
Result: DNF (mechanical)

Nicky Grist Stages
Series: BRC National, BTRDA, Welsh
Car: Mitsubishi Lancer E9
Result: 4th BRC, 6th BTRDA, 5th Welsh

RSAC Scottish Rally
Series: BTRDA, Scottish
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 1st BTRDA, 3rd SRC

Grampian Forest Rally
Series: BRC National, Scottish
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 1st BRC, 1st SRC

Woodpecker Stages Rally
Series: BTRDA, Welsh
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 1st BTRDA, 1st Welsh

Galloway Hills Rally
Series: Scottish
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 2nd

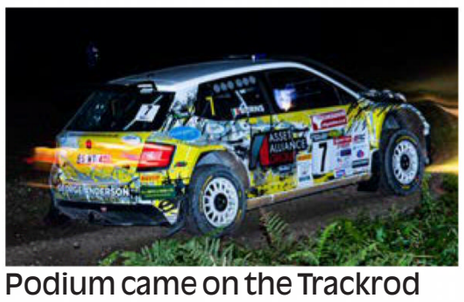
Trackrod Rally Yorkshire
Series: BRC National, BTRDA
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 3rd BRC, 6th BTRDA

Mull Rally
Series: BRC National
Car: Mitsubishi Lancer E9
Result: 1st BRC

Carlisle Stages
Series: Scottish
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 1st

Cambrian Rally
Series: BRC National, BTRDA, Welsh
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 1st BRC, 1st BTRDA, 1st Welsh

Rallynuts Stages Rally
Series: BTRDA, Welsh
Car: Skoda Fabia R5
Result: 3rd BTRDA, 2nd Welsh



Podium came on the Trackrod

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Toyota man doubles up as Sutton zeroes in on BTCC crown P28
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Landmark result for Merc's star as he denies Norris a maiden win
LEWIS HAILS A MAGICAL MOMENT AS HE HITS A CENTURY
By Matt James
Lewis Hamilton has hailed his rivals after landing his 100th grand prix win in Russia on Sunday, snatching the victory from fellow Brit Lando Norris.
From pole position, McLaren man Norris seemed set to take his maiden victory until a late rain shower left him slithering off the circuit. Hamilton had been called in by his Mercedes team and swapped tyres. He was able to hunt down Norris and take the race win in the dying moments.
Hamilton, who finished one place ahead of his title rival Max Verstappen, says the 100-win benchmark is something he finds hard to believe.
The seven-time champion said: "It's a magical moment. I could only ever have dreamed of still being here and having this opportunity to win these races and get to drive against such phenomenal talent this late in my career and to continue to building with Mercedes. I'm so proud of everything we've done, not only on track but also off."
Full report, p4
Special feature: Lewis's best wins p30
Lewis has achieved his big target
Hamilton left it late to pounce for his 100th win
REPORT
EDWARDS TOPS A DRAMATIC TRACKROD
Volkswagen man back in the title mix with victory p18
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RALLY REPORTS

ROGER ALBERT CLARK RALLY: INTERIM REPORT **NOVEMBER 25-28**

RALLY ENTRY FACES DOWN A STORM

Paul Lawrence wrapped up warm and followed the action on the Roger Albert Clark event – so far

Photos: Paul and Ben Lawrence

Barrett coped with all that was thrown at him

Northern Ireland's Paul Barrett was just five special stages away from victory on the Roger Albert Clark Rally as Motorsport News closed for press early on Monday morning.

In a rally that lost a day completely due to Storm Arwen, which wreaked havoc across the north of England and Scotland, the destiny of victory was to be sealed in the forests of south Wales.

Jason Pritchard and Phil Clarke led the rally until Sunday evening when they rolled on the Dyfi stage, and the chasing Barrett/Gordon Noble took over the lead.

However, Osian Pryce and Noel O'Sullivan are chasing hard and reduced a 3m20s gap after Kielder to just 1m46s after their first day in Wales.

Once again, this epic five-day rally is earning its place in rallying folklore and just finishing will be a huge achievement for the weary survivors.

DAY 1: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25

The first turn claims its victims as sub-zero event gets underway

The rally started with a bang, literally in some cases, with four stages on Thursday evening in Newcastleton and Kershope on a clear, cold, frosty night.

The pace was fierce from the start but, incredibly, the first corner of the rally claimed three leading contenders as Roger Chilman, Josh Browne, and Harry Hunt all went off the road at the first real corner of the rally.

Chilman in particular went over several times, and his rally was over. Meanwhile, Pritchard settled into the groove despite a misfire in the first pair of stages to take an early advantage over Pryce, who admitted that he was unsure about just where to set his pace. He ended the evening 56s down on Pritchard as Barrett slotted into second place.

Others to struggle through the evening included Matthew Robinson, who admitted that he didn't get on well in the dark, while Jerry Bailey's rally ended with an engine fire on the second Kershope stage.

Pritchard said: "We're being very cautious and there's a long way to go."

Pryce commented: "It was a job to judge the pace. But we'll find a balance by tomorrow."

Barrett was in striking form and slotted into third, setting times to rival Pritchard and Pryce. "There was a bit of fog at the top of Kershope," said Barrett. "But we're definitely going better than we did in 2019. We've done nothing radical [to the car]."

A misfire afflicted Jason Pritchard's Ford Escort Mk2

DAY 2: FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 26

Kielder Forest serves up horrendous conditions for rally's faithful

This was the big day with more than 100 stage miles across eight stages in the central block of Kielder; an unforgiving place to go rallying.

By the end of the day, blizzard conditions in gale force winds made it even more of a challenge and the final stage was curtailed in the interest of competitor and marshal safety.

Barrett set a searing pace on Friday morning to keep the pressure on Pritchard. After their first run through the mighty 17-mile Bewshaugh stage, the lead gap was down from 46s overnight to 36s.

However, as conditions worsened, Pritchard took a massive profit in Falstone by beating Barrett by 52s, having come close to catching the Northern Irishman in the falling snow. Now only the second run through Bewshaugh was left and it was incredibly tough as crews faced a raging blizzard and lying snow. Pritchard was back to running first on the road in the main field but as he crossed the flying finish another set of lights was right behind him. Barrett had all but caught his rival and so the day ended with them 37s apart, marking a nine-second gain for Barrett in 105 stage miles. "Absolutely horrendous in there," said Pritchard on the stop line, visibly relieved to have simply got through unscathed.

"Just push, push, push," said Barrett of his remarkable day.

Pryce was one of many to drop time in Bewshaugh and ended the day nearly four minutes down but still third ahead of Ryan Champion's Porsche 911 as Seb Perez and Adrian Hetherington rounded out the top six overall. In the Open Rally, Neil Weaver and Jack Morton set a ferocious pace in their Super 1600 Vauxhall Corsa to lead by a huge margin.

British Rally man Osian Pryce got to grips with stages

DAY 3: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Storm Arwen takes its toll as fallen trees force stage cancellations

The situation in the forests on Friday deteriorated rapidly as the evening developed and the rally was halted before trees started coming down.

However, trees down across the road sections made life increasingly difficult and around 30 crews were stranded in Langholm as fallen forestry even blocked the main A7. It was 1000hrs on Saturday before some of them made it back to Carlisle.

With the Scottish stages and access roads blocked by fallen trees, rally manager Colin Heppenstall took the responsible decision to cancel Saturday's leg, putting the safety of everyone involved ahead of all other considerations.

The service area was full of tales of a challenging night and many crews were grateful to the Crown Inn at Langholm, which opened its doors to everyone and ensured those stranded were at least safe, warm and well fed.

Adrian Hetherington pushed hard in tricky conditions

DAY 4: SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Dyfnant and Dyfi serve up a slippery test to catch out the unwary

After the transport section south, crews regrouped in Welshpool for two runs through three classic mid-Wales stages.

However, the storm had left the Gartheiniog stage littered with trees and so only Dyfnant and Dyfi lay in wait. Even on Sunday afternoon, the higher sections harboured snow and ice and that only got worse for the second runs on Sunday evening.

Dyfi changed the complexion of the rally as Pritchard rolled out of the lead as the mighty battle with Barrett finally reached its conclusion. But Barrett had no time to savour his new-found lead as Pryce was on the attack and pulled back 1m34s in just three stages. The front-runners were red flagged on the first Dyfi stage after Pritchard's roll and that had denied Pryce the chance to take back more time in his own backyard.

"It's not easy," said Barrett. "That last stage was sheet ice, but we'll just keep at it," he said of his plan for Monday. Champion moved into a secure third, but fourth-placed Perez had a single second in hand over the charging Hetherington. Despite stopping in Dyfnant 2 with sheared wheel studs, Weaver's lead in the Open Rally was such that even with two stage maximums, he still led by nearly five minutes.

Look out for the definitive report of the rally in next week's Motorsport News.

Variety was provided by Ryan Champion in a Porsche

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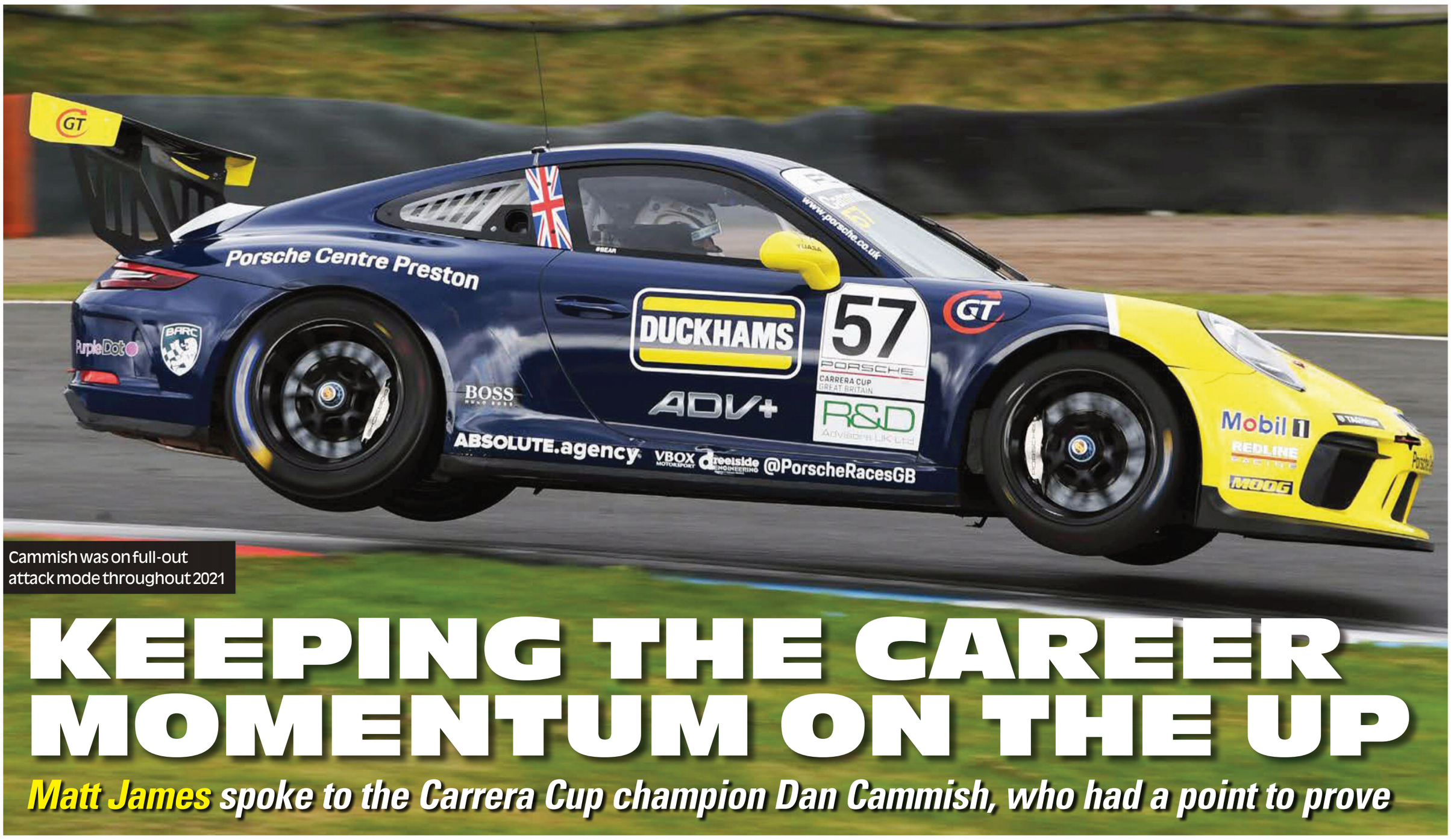
FEATURE



Cammish was on full-out attack mode throughout 2021

KEEPING THE CAREER MOMENTUM ON THE UP

***Matt James** spoke to the Carrera Cup champion Dan Cammish, who had a point to prove*

Serial title collector: Dan Cammish underlined his ability with 2021 title

November and December are tough months for a racing driver. The engines might have been switched off for the season but as soon as the final chequered flag as fallen, most thoughts turn to the year to come.

Sponsor meetings are arranged, programmes are decided and the hard yards begin. Far from being a closed season, it is open season in terms of raising budget. There are a lucky few, however, who don't have to go through this stress.

Dan Cammish was a driver who had a serene journey through Christmas and the New Year in 2020. He had a contract to continue into his fourth season in the British Touring Car Championship with Team Dynamics at the wheel of a Honda Civic Type R. After coming within a hair's breadth of the crown in 2019 and building on his progress the year after, he was full of optimism.

Then came the phone call. It was all change at Team Dynamics and Cammish, who had not even been looking around for a ride, was out of work. Three-time BTCC champion Gordon Shedden was back and Cammish was surplus to requirements.

It was quite a shockwave and gave the Yorkshireman very little time to sort out an alternative deal for 2021.

Cammish made a BTCC cameo in the opening round at Thruxton in a BTC Racing Honda and came within a whisker of winning the second race – only missing out as he played the team game and allowed team-mate Josh Cook an untroubled run to victory. Already, by that stage, he had bolted together a deal to return to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB competition – the arena in which he had made his reputation in the first place – with Redline Racing.

After victory on his debut weekend as a guest driver in 2014, Cammish had become the king of the German sportscars and was champion in 2015 and 2016 with Redline Racing. Even so, committing to a return for 2021 was a risky strategy, and the 32-year-old knew it.

"I did sit and weigh up the pros and cons," says Cammish. "To go back and race a Porsche and put my reputation on the line – especially against someone like [2020 champion and Porsche scholar] Harry King, who had dominated the year before – was a big thing. It could have gone one of two ways for me.

"On the other side of it, I had made the commitment to go with Redline Racing and despite the BTCC offers that came at me, I stuck to that. I didn't have a crystal ball – I didn't know what would happen. Certainly, there was an element of jeopardy there."

The jeopardy increased because of the nature of the Porsche Carrera Cup GB. Although it has always been a tough nut to crack, the 2021 line-up brought it to an entirely new level in terms of the on-track warfare. Numerous young drivers were using the championship as a path to the top and the level of competition was phenomenal.

The 1992 BTCC champion and ITV4 commentator Tim Harvey has been a guiding hand to Cammish since they linked up in 2015 when Harvey masterminded the young charger's switch to sportscar racing from Formula Ford.

Harvey knows Cammish's skills

Harvey himself is a two-time Porsche champion and he had a grandstand seat on the 2021 action from behind the microphone. He sums up the challenge: "The Porsche Cerrara Cup GB is a very different animal than when Dan had won it previously and it was one of the most competitive Porsche championships we have had in a very long time – I can't remember a closer one in terms of the number of winners. You didn't know who was going to win from one meeting to the next. There were some fantastic drivers and it was a high level of competition. Dan had to work out how to win that championship."

He did, and he did it by finally securing the honours after a tense finale at Brands Hatch in October. The high level of competition and the raft of young racers might, Cammish thinks, have actually played into his hands – although he didn't think that to begin with.

"The reversed-grid race has changed the way you win that title," he says. "Add in to that the cars were in their final year [before a new model] and every one of the teams on the grid was fully on top of the 991 generation cars.

"I also had to dig up a memory bank that

"It could have gone one of two ways for me in '21..."

Dan Cammish

Photos: Jakob Ebrey, Motorsport Images

Cammish had a host of talents to overcome in '21

Cammish outpaced Shedden in BTCC one-off

I had buried three years before the start of 2021. The Porsches are such a different car to drive and on the first few test days I did, I thought I had made a terrible mistake. I remember thinking that the car was driving me and not the other way around.

"At the beginning of the programme, I was also still dealing with the fallout of being out of the touring car paddock too," he admits honestly. "As great as Porsche racing is, it is a support championship and you lose all the benefits that go with being part of the main show. You aren't so much in the spotlight.

"In the BTCC you roll out of the truck, get in the car and race. In support races, you sit in the assembly area for 40 minutes before you can get going. You realise, after a while, that the BTCC really is the main show.

"I was looking at Dynamics and Gordon Shedden coming back into the team, and there was some worry for me that went with that. If Gordon had come back and been super successful, where would that have left me then? But it played out like I thought it would and he came back and had more of a difficult season than anyone would have expected. It only made me look better in a way."

The shadow of the BTCC, and particularly that of Team Dynamics, was always there. But Cammish remained undimmed and reminded people of the skills that had got him into the BTCC in the first place.

Harvey is able to pinpoint exactly the ability that Cammish has and remembers the stand-out performances from his first time in a Porsche in 2014. Harvey says: "The thing that struck me about Dan – and this has been something he has been consistently good at ever since – was his instant pace. He delivered on the optimum lap time whatever the circumstances. No matter what the conditions are or what tyres he is on, he gets the maximum. If you put better tyres on, he will go two or three tenths of a second per lap faster. If you put new tyres on, he would go five or sixth tenths of a lap quicker.

"There wasn't any building up to speed or excuses: he always delivered, and that it a real skill for a driver. Give any driver enough laps and they will always get up to speed, but Dan can do it from the outset with no fuss. That is when you see just how good someone is. Take that ability into the qualifying sessions or on the first lap of the race, and the guy will deliver straight away."

Harvey adds that perhaps Cammish's biggest flaw came from his own mind, feeling the pressure to prove that he was fastest all the time. For a driver who isn't blessed with deep pockets, the mental stress to perform is always there: every time they are behind the wheel, they can be forced to drive like it is their last race rather than look at the bigger picture.

A three-year stint in the no-holds-barred action of the BTCC – where success ballast, option tyres and reversed grids mean that a driver rarely has the optimum car – have made Cammish a more rounded driver, says Harvey.

"Dan has improved in terms of his race management and playing the percentages, and you could see that in 2021," adds Harvey. "His racecraft has got better. His first year in the BTCC in 2018 showed plenty of flashes of speed but he had to learn how it ebbs and flows. Particularly in touring cars, there will be rounds where you don't have the fastest car but you don't need to break the lap record in every race. I think Harry King needs to go to that school too…"

Cammish too has noticed the skills that three seasons in a front-wheel-drive Honda had added to his abilities behind the wheel. "Certainly, there was more in my armoury and it was noticeable that I was the driver who finished every race," points out the now three-time title winner.

"I was also the guy who had the most podiums. Was I the fastest ultimately this time around? Maybe not, but things had changed.

"We had a battle with car performance this year and we struggled with straight-line speed and we looked everywhere to try and find out why. Every time the road went straight, we were in trouble. I still got it over the line in terms of the title, but it wasn't the easiest of seasons and there was a lot of work that went into it."

The work that went in meant that Cammish had the last laugh. While Shedden and team-mate Dan Rowbottom weren't able to get anywhere near the results out of the Team Dynamics BTCC cars that Cammish had, the ousted racer was setting about adding to his own reputation with another one-make title. From a bleak first week of March, Cammish was left with the biggest smile in October.

The racer himself acknowledges that 2021 had been a year like no other. "This season started as a real disappointment and I didn't know where I was going with things, what the next steps were going to be and how it was going to play out," he says. "Looking back, I wouldn't have changed a thing. They do say that things happen for a reason in life and this is one of those times.

"I took a step back I won the championship against some incredibly tough opposition. I showed that I could go between front- and rear-wheel drive and still perform at a very high level. People didn't forget about me, I hung around the BTCC and put my name in front of people."

And his name is very high up team managers' shopping lists for 2022. After the turbulent start to 2021, Cammish's stock is high enough to make sure that he doesn't have to go through those choppy waters again. ■

Cammish was a mainstay of the Dynamics BTCC attack for three years

CV

Dan Cammish

From: Leeds
Born: April 10, 1989

2021: Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion, three wins (Redline Racing); British Touring Car Championship, three races (BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R)
2020: British Touring Car Championship, third, four wins (Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R)
2019: British Touring Car Championship, third, two wins (Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R)
2018: British Touring Car Championship, 10th, two wins (Team Dynamics Honda Civic Type R)
2017: Porsche Carrera Cup GB, third, eight wins (Redline Racing); Porsche Supercup, fourth (Lechner MSG Racing Team)
2016: Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion, 12 wins (Redline Racing); Porsche Supercup, one race (Redline Racing); Blancpain GT Endurance Series, one race (Konrad Motorsport)
2015: Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion, 11 wins (Redline Racing); Porsche Supercup, one race (Redline Racing); Porsche Carrera Cup Germany, four races (Konrad Motorsport)
2014: British GT Championship, ninth in GT4 (Team Parker Racing); Porsche Carrera Cup GB, two races (Team Parker Racing)
2013: British Formula Ford Championship winner, 24 victories (JTR)
2012: Eurocup Formula Renault, two races (Atech Reid GP)
2011: Formula Renault UK, sixth (Mark Burdett Motorsport); Asia Racing Series (Eurasia Motorsport)
2010: British Formula Ford Championship, third (Kevin Mills Racing/JTR)
2009: British Formula Ford Championship, Scholarship Class champion (Kevin Mills Racing)

Formula Ford crown in 2013

Cammish in Supercup, 2016

Proving the pace: Cammish's second Porsche crown came in 2016

An instant impression: A guest drive in 2014 brought race victory

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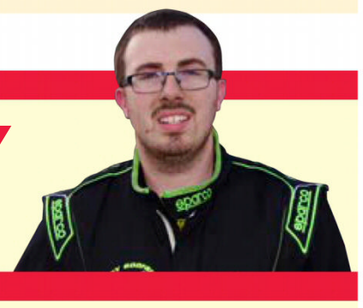
COLUMNIST

MIKEY GODFREY



The National Hot Rod battler tells us why short ovals are the way to go

Photos: mkpics.net

Mikey Godfrey admits that he is fully addicted to the thrills of National Hot Rod competition

I guess I'm really going to split opinions with this view but I'm going to challenge anyone to find a racing series in the United Kingdom with better affordability than National Hot Rods.

Before I start, I will just fill you all in on what National Hot Rods actually are. The premier non-contact oval formula in the UK. It is fast, intense and, as I have found out, really easy to get addicted to.

The cars are fully spaced-framed purpose-built racing machines, they have two-litre engines producing around 260bhp with a sequential gearbox, fibreglass panel kits, and racing slicks all crammed into a car weighing 700kg.

I appreciate the car is a big initial outlay with a top-spec second-hand car ready to go costing between £20,000 and £30,000. However, that is always going to be the case with a car of similar spec regardless of what racing series or type of motorsport you choose. Once you have the car there is no test to take, costly licence to buy or expensive entry fees to every event you enter. An outlay of £100 gets you a licence for the year and then £25 entry per meeting gets the driver and two mechanics into the stadium. If you want to do every qualifying round and all the championships, you will do around 18 meetings a year between March and November: 14 qualifying meetings and then the four major championships.

Grids for heat races are worked out on average points with the highest points-earners starting at the back and the lowest taking the front rows. This makes for exciting racing with the star-graders having to fight through to the front while giving everyone a much better chance at a good result.

Have you seen the facilities at the big circuits around the UK, you might ask me? These alone are the worth the entry fee. I would reply by asking if you have been to Foxhall Stadium or Lochgelly Raceway? The facilities at either will rival anywhere and, as another point, we are going to race, not walk around in our best clothes.

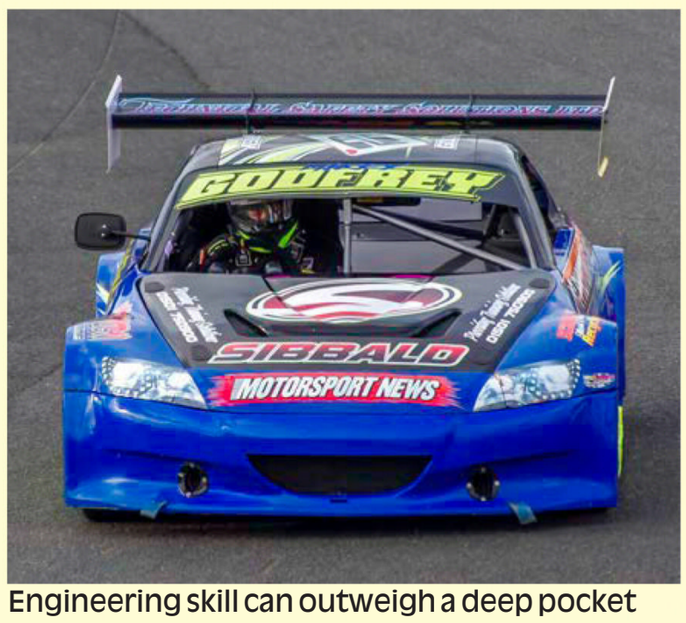
The next point is the one that convinced me that Hot Rods was the formula for us. There is strict control of the Hoosier tyres which limits them to one new slick or wet per meeting (costing around £150). Four new tyres are allowed at all the major championships. New tyres make a big difference to the car and if the rules allowed you would have people putting them on new every race so the introduction of the 'one new' rule really does keep the cost manageable and also ensures a much more level playing field for everyone.

I'm not going to talk too much about damage and repairs because it is racing and it happens regardless of formula. You could argue that you are going to get into more scraps with 35 cars crammed onto a quarter-mile oval than spaced out over a two-mile circuit. However, spinning onto the infield makes much less of a mess than a tyre barrier at Brands Hatch. We have had several meetings with some damage lately but then several more with nothing other than a few scrapes so one cancels the other out.

The rules for the formula really do concentrate on keeping costs under control. The shock absorbers are limited to £600 per corner, engines although heavily modified have strict rules for what can and can't be done. The general rule being if it doesn't say you can do it then you can't.

Although the basis of the cars has remained the same for the past 20 years it just works. You don't need to reinvent the wheel or spend thousands on research and development. You can buy all the bits off the shelf and build a car in your garage that is pretty much guaranteed to be doing laps within a couple of tenths a second to everyone else. No fancy aero package or expensive electronics just good old-fashioned engineering and a pair of twin 45 Weber carburettors.

To me, it's everything motor racing should be. Just raw passion and determination under the lights on a Saturday night. A place where skill can still beat a chequebook and the team with the biggest budget and most mechanics doesn't always win.



Engineering skill can outweigh a deep pocket

To the winner, the spoils: victory at Hednesford

Tight racing takes place on the quarter-mile ovals

"The rules for the formula really do concentrate on keeping costs under control"

WHAT'S ON

YOUTUBE

This week multiple British Touring/Saloon Car champion and multiple Le Mans entrant Chris Hodgetts is our esteemed guest for our readers' Q&A. As we also find out, these days he is a racing instructor of some repute, and via YouTube we get close to a first-hand view of being one of his pupils.

The video's uploader is 'Captain Vimes', or rather Caterham racer Kevin Barrett, and in the video he's piloting a Vauxhall VX220 for his first time around the magnificent and scenic Anglesey circuit. Hodgetts imparts his forthright wisdom from the passenger seat on how to achieve the best lap time via the steering, throttle and braking inputs. We watch from just behind the protagonists' ears.

Amid it we learn from Hodgetts that one should treat the throttle "like a good woman", as well as of his disdain of the car's "shit tyres". But it's fascinating stuff, and not least for Barrett as the video concludes with him putting what he's learned together for a flying lap on his own.

You can watch the eight minutes of this at: youtube.com/watch?v=XIsLZnzQbNc or you can search for: 'Anglesey Circuit – Tuition from Chris Hodgetts – BTCC champ in VX220'.

While if you fancy seeing Hodgetts driving himself, there's a treat of him in the last-ever Birmingham Superprix meeting, in 1990, in the TVR Tuscan Challenge support race. That's at: youtube.com/watch?v=DX0m-NnLQDg or via searching: '1990 - Birmingham Superprix - Highlights of the TVR Tuscan Challenge race'. And stick around for Hodgetts' post-race 'celebration'.

Graham Keilloh

Hodgetts chats to MN's editor Matt James

TV GUIDE

The Formula 1 title fight is, as we know, coming nicely to a boil and the latest instalment is this weekend with the season's penultimate round at another new venue of Saudi Arabia's Jeddah street track. Sky Sports F1's coverage of it all starts in the usual way with The F1 Show at 1800hrs-1900hrs today (Thursday) followed by the drivers' conference.

Ted Kravitz's notebooks are here too: his qualifying sojourn is at 2030hrs-2100hrs on Saturday while his race version is at 2045hrs-2115hrs on Sunday. Both also get repeated. Channel 4's qualifying highlights are at 2040hrs-2210hrs on Saturday and for the race they're 2200hrs-0030hrs on Sunday.

Eurosport 1 in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday lets you watch some Pure ETCR, an electric amalgam of rallycross and circuit racing, at 0130hrs-0200hrs both days.

While for something a more homespun ITV4 early on Sunday has Porsche Carrera Cup and Ginetta GT4 Supercup action from Croft earlier this year at 0745hrs-0845hrs (and again an hour later on ITV4+1).

Formula 1 fires back to life

BT Sport allows you to catch up on Australian Supercars action ahead of this weekend's Bathurst 1000, with highlights from a recent Sydney contest at 1130hrs-1230hrs on BT Sport 2 today and it's all shown again early tomorrow at 0400hrs-0500hrs on BT Sport 3.

Premier Sports 1 on Monday shows the best of the recent Brisca F1 action from Skegness Raceway, which it's showing at 1900hrs-2000hrs.

Graham Keilloh

LIVE TV

FORMULA 1
SAUDI ARABIAN GRAND PRIX
JEDDAH CORNICHE CIRCUIT

Practice 1: Friday, 1300hrs-1445hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 2: Friday, 1645hrs-1830hrs, Sky Sports F1
Practice 3: Saturday, 1345hrs-1510hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Saturday, 1600hrs-1835hrs, Sky Sports F1
Race: Sunday, 1600hrs-2045hrs (start time 1730hrs), Sky Sports F1

FORMULA 2
SAUDI ARABIA

Practice: Friday, 1045hrs-1130hrs, Sky Sports F1
Qualifying: Friday, 1515hrs-1555hrs, Sky Sports F1
Sprint Race 1: Saturday, 1225hrs-1325hrs, Sky Sports F1
Sprint Race 2: Saturday, 1835hrs-1935hrs, Sky Sports F1
Feature Race: 1415hrs-1535hrs, Sky Sports F1

V8 SUPERCARS
BATHURST 1000
MOUNT PANORAMA

Race: Sunday, 0045hrs-0800hrs, BT Sport 2; 0100hrs-0800hrs, Freesports

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ART EDITOR MIKE STOKOE'S FAVOURITE OF THE WEEK!

David Harbey went to the MN Circuit Rally clash at Cadwell Park

Ben Lawrence, from MN Series

Chris Collier captured this splash

More rallying, from David Harbey

Walter Hayes, from Peter Atkins

NEXT WEEK — OUT THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9

*Correct at time of going to press

READERS' Q&A: WARREN HUGHES

The talented Geordie with the heavy right foot

THE VERY BEST OF BRITISH

How Matt Edwards took a dramatic title in the BRC

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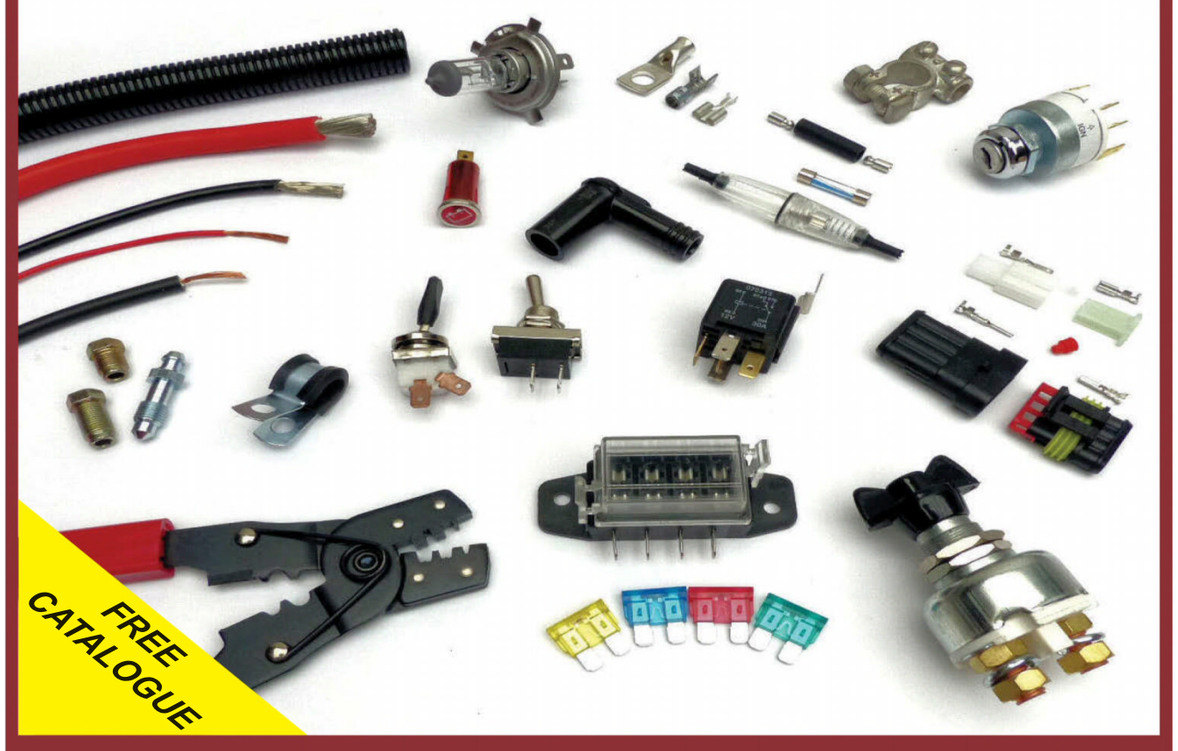

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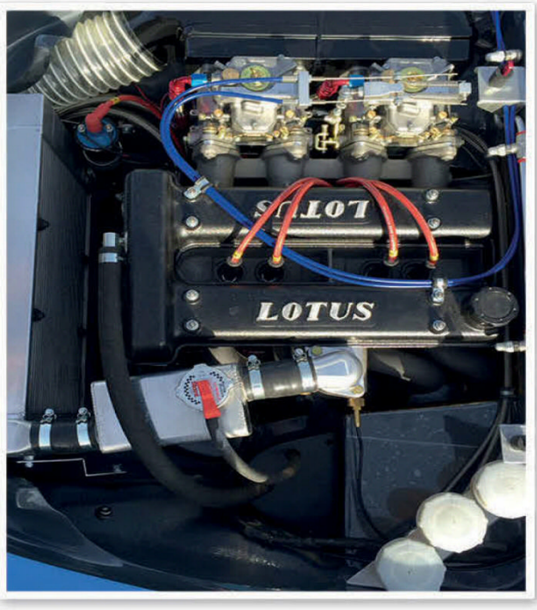

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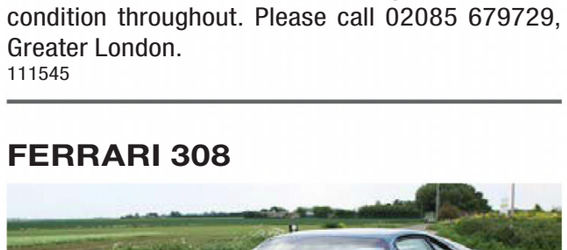

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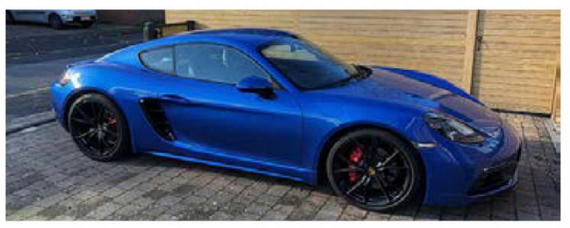

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